

Assessing employee turnover of young professionals in the wastewater sector: the East Rand Water Care case study

by

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ABSTRACT

South Africa, as a water-scarce country is faced with shortage of water managers and engineers. The situation is due to employee turnover caused by competition; employee migration to cite a few reasons.

The shortage results in poor wastewater works' management; the contamination of secondary sources of water like dams and rivers. Other results of the shortage are the deterioration of community health, water infrastructure and the work overload experienced by the overstretched managers still in the system.

The reduction of the reasons for employee turnover in the wastewater sector would ensure the dignity and rights of citizens are restored and respected respectively and the environment properly maintained. The retention of Plant managers in charge of the Wastewater Treatment Works (WWTW) in the country, and more specifically in the East Rand Water Care, a subsidiary of the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality (EMM), cannot be postponed any further as it is imperative to avoid further losses of key employees.

The study sought to assess the reasons for the high turnover of young Plant managers within the East Rand Water Care; to highlight the negative effects of the problem; to review the organization's existing policies meant to curtail the problem and to propose measures to curb the challenge. A vital distinction to clarify is that the research looks at voluntary turnover, not involuntary turnover.

The case study, content and secondary data analyses were the designs used to conduct the research with the East Rand Water Care as the organization to be studied in order to discover the degree to which the wastewater sector utilises employee retention strategies to control employee turnover. Secondary qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods, and primary data in the form of structured interviews, were used to gather data which were interpreted to inform the research results.

A total of seven, inclusive of personal and organizational, reasons were found to be behind the voluntary employee turnover rate. Professional perceptions were found not to be among the reasons for employee turnover within the organization. The most common reasons for employee turnover, the research found were:

- Low identification with the wastewater environment;

- Economic reasons;
- Poaching;
- Lack of higher incentives;
- Communication and
- Family.
- The most unique reason found, concerned the health risks associated with the wastewater industry.

Weakened knowledge capture, re-use and management; financial costs and high absenteeism were some of the negative effects caused by the turnover of young Plant managers. Most importantly, the poor achievement in Green Drop assessments is another negative effect brought about employee turnover. Green Drop assessments are an annual initiative of the Department of Water and Sanitation that assess the quality of the final effluent of municipal wastewater and award certificates for those wastewater works that achieve the expected levels of high quality. The research also found that all the policies meant to assist internal organizational employee retention were not succeeding in achieving the retention of Plant managers. The reason for their failure was that they were not primarily meant for employee retention.

The results provide an indication that there is a need for a concerted effort by the organization to put in place measures that would lessen the quits of valuable employees like:

- Retention policy development and implementation which should be applied and monitored to ensure the compliance with the government plan of a healthy environment. If the retention of such employees is not prioritized, the municipal obligation of providing a healthy environment to the citizens by the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality through its subsidiary would be compromised.

OPSOMMING

Werknemeromset lei daartoe dat Suid-Afrika as 'n waterskaars land 'n tekort aan waterbestuurders en wateringenieurs ervaar. Twee van die redes hiervoor is kompetisie vir hulle dienste en werknermigrasie. Die tekort veroorsaak dat afvalwaterwerke agteruitgaan; sekondêre waterbronne soos riviëre en damme besoedel word; gemeenskapsgesondheid en waterinfrastruktuur agteruitgaan; en ooreiste bestuurders wat nog in die stelsel werkzaam is, oorlaai word. Suksesvolle uitskakeling van die redes vir werknemeromset in die sektor sal verseker dat die waardigheid en regte van burgers onderskeidelik herstel en gerespekteer word en dat die omgewing behoorlik in stand gehou word. Die behoud van aanlegbestuurders in beheer van die rioolsuiweringswerke (RSW) in die land, en meer spesifiek in die Ekurhuleni Metropolitaanse Munisipaliteit (EMM), kan dus geensins verder uitgestel word nie, daar dit noodsaaklik is om verdere verliese te voorkom.

Die studie het ten doel gehad om die redes vir die hoë omset van jong aanlegbestuurders in die Oos-Rand Watersorgorganisasie te evalueer; die negatiewe gevolge van die probleem uit te lig; die organisasie se bestaande beleid wat bedoel is om die probleem te bekamp in oorsig te neem, en om maatreëls voor te stel om die probleem aan te spreek. 'n Belangrike onderskeid wat uitgeklaar moet word, is dat die navorsing vrywillige omset ondersoek het en onwillekeurige omset uitgesluit het.

Die benadering wat gevolg is, was dié van 'n gevallestudie van die Oos-Rand se watersorgorganisasie om te bepaal tot watter mate die afvalwatersektor se strategieë vir die behoud van werknemers in werking gestel word om werknemeromset te oorkom. Sekondêre kwalitatiewe en kwantitatiewe data-insameling en ontledingsmetodes insluitend gestruktureerde onderhoude is onderneem om inligting te bekom en te interpreteer om die navorsingsresultate in te lig.

Sewe redes van persoonlike en organisatoriese aard is vir die vrywillige werknemer uitvalsyfer gevind. Daar was geen aanduiding van professionele persepsies onder die redes vir die werknemeromset binne die organisasie nie. Die mees algemene redes vir werknemeromset was 'n lae gaad van identifikasie met die afvalwateromgewing; ekonomiese redes; wegrokkeling; gebrek aan hoër aansporings; onvoldoende kommunikasie; en druk van familie. Gesondheidsrisiko's wat verband hou met die afvalwateraanleg is geïdentifiseer as die mees

unieke rede vir werknemeromset. Verswakte kennisvaslegging, hergebruik en bestuur; swak prestasie met betrekking tot *Green Drop* assesserings; finansiële koste; en verhoogde afwesigheid was 'n paar van die negatiewe gevolge van die omsetkoers van jong aanlegbestuurders.

Die resultate gee 'n aanduiding dat daar 'n behoefte bestaan vir 'n doelgerigte poging in die organisasie om maatreëls in te stel wat sal verhoed dat waardevolle werknemers bedank. Die ontwikkeling van 'n beleid om werknemers te behou en die implementering daarvan moet toegepas en gemonitor word om nakoming van die regering se visie vir 'n gesonde omgewing te verseker. Die munisipale verpligting om 'n gesonde omgewing vir burgers van die Ekurhuleni Metropolitaanse Munisipaliteit deur die rioolsuiweringswerke te bewerkstellig, sal benadeel word indien die behoud van bogenoemde werknemers nie 'n prioriteit word nie.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The East Rand Water Care (ERWAT) is a Section 21 company that employs about six hundred employees in its wastewater operations and support services. The company is an entity owned by the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality.

ERWAT provides the means by which the municipality endeavours to meet its obligations towards the community. As indicated by Scott (2005: 173), municipalities should give priority to the basic needs of the community by providing universal access to essential services. The services should be reasonably priced for all and they should be provided in a sustainable manner (Scott, 2005: 173). ERWAT is a national leader in wastewater treatment innovation and technology.

The organisation fulfils its function by operating nineteen wastewater treatment plants in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality. The wastewater is gathered in the treatment plants, purified by adding chemicals like chlorine to ensure that the degree of its purity meets the specifications set out by the Department of Water and Sanitation. The treatment of wastewater is done to ensure that the final effluent released into rivers and streams meets environmental and municipal bylaws.

After having been released in streams and rivers, the water is collected in catchment areas and treated as potable water for human consumption, agriculture and other forms of economic activities. This, according to Scott (2005: 177), is done to promote a safe and healthy environment for the community by ensuring that the water when discharged from the treatment plants is not detrimental to small organisms that live in the rivers and not harmful to people who live around the river banks.

The core department within the ERWAT entity is the Operations Department, which is the main driver in the pursuit of the attainment of the entity's mission and vision.

The ERWAT Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS) reflects the average age of the company's employees working in the core department as thirty-nine years. The system further indicates that the core department comprises six percent professional employees who have acquired qualifications in water utilisation and chemical engineering occupying positions at managerial and supervisory level as shown in Figure 1.1. Fifteen percent of the department is made up of water equipment operators, famously known as "operators", who mostly possess a grade nine or Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) level four certificate and a year's technical certificate in Water and Wastewater Treatment Process Operations. The last seventy nine percent are general workers who either cannot read and write or have some level of education that does not exceed the General Education and Training Band (GET). The GET band, according to the Revised National Curriculum Statement, refers to school grades R to 9 (Republic of South Africa, 2002: 3).

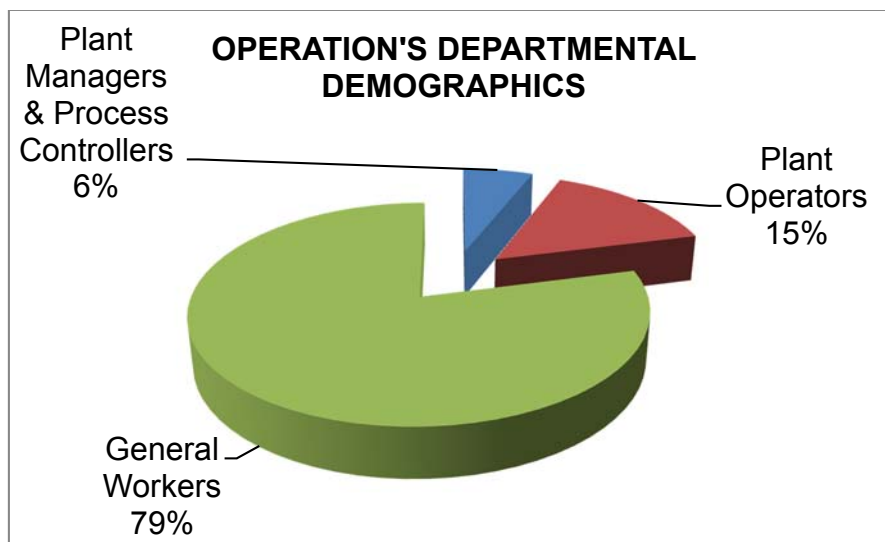


Figure 1.1: Operations demographics (Human Resources Information System, 2012)

1.2 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

Water is the essence of life and a scarce commodity (United Nations, 2010: 1). Safe drinking water and sanitation are essential to sustain life and health, and is basic to the dignity of all. It is estimated that about eight hundred and eighty-four million people in the world do not have access to clean and safe water (United Nations, 2010: 1). Water is also used in food production and without water the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015 cannot be attained (Republic of South Africa, 2012: 1). According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) rivers in the country, the Vaal River as an example, are increasingly contaminated by faecal material because of a lack of proper water management (OECD, 2011: 76).

South Africa is a water-stressed country and annually receives approximately five hundred millimetres of rainfall, which is sixty percent of the world average rainfall estimation of eight hundred millimetres (Mukheibir, 2007: 2). It is clear that there will be a water crisis in South Africa in the near future if the skills within the wastewater sector are not nurtured and retained because there would not be sufficient human resources to look after the water resources.

According to O'keefe (2013: 1), ecologists from Rhodes University, there are very few skilled water scientists, water engineers, water managers and water policy workers in South Africa. Experts in the field of water see the people who are in charge of the water services sector as very thinly stretched and that the country needs to focus on capacity building initiatives to produce more water managers and related professionals (O'keefe, 2013: 1).

The Proposed National Water Resource Strategy II states that, given the fact that about forty to sixty percent of the country's water resources are lost to either illegal connections or serious leakages in the ageing infrastructure, the country has to have qualified managers to try and stem the depletion of water resources (Republic of South Africa, 2012a: 3). In addition, while the mining industry is a significant contributor to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), contaminated mine water that has a direct impact on water users also impacts negatively on the water environment in South Africa (Ochieng, Seanego & Nkwonta, 2010: 3352). The reliable provision of water in sufficient quantities and

the necessary quality is a vital contributor to the growth of the economy and job creation (South Africa, 2012: 3).

The research setting, that is, the East Rand Water Care, has two types of Plant managers (East Rand Water, 2012: 27). The first type are those that are older and have been loyal to the company, who rely on a vast number of years of experience but mostly do not have the necessary qualifications to run wastewater treatment plants (East Rand Water, 2012: 27). The older and qualified engineers who had been managing the wastewater works before, currently work as Regional and District Managers and are office based doing the support function. The second type include younger plant managers and process controllers who are qualified to run wastewater treatment plants using today's sophisticated technology (East Rand Water, 2012: 28). The younger group refers to workers between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four whereas the older group are thirty-five years and above (East Rand Water, 2012: 27).

A notable trend of resignations among the younger group has been observed on a regular basis in 2011 and 2012. In the two years under review, twenty percent and sixteen percent of young plant managers and process controllers respectively tendered their resignations (East Rand Water, 2012: 28). As a result, the operation of treatment plants was handed to inexperienced persons or completely new managers from time to time.

In the worst case scenario the authority is temporarily delegated, on a caretaker basis to a manager who will be supervising the wastewater plant without a manager. The same manager would be responsible for the wastewater works originally allocated to him or her, while the process to fill the vacancy is under way.

As a result of the resignations and absence of leadership in the treatment plants, sample results from the laboratory are not received on time. As a consequence, the advice to the personnel in the treatment plants is delayed regarding problems that exist and that hampers the timely implementation of the necessary interventions, to avert undesirable outcomes. As a result, communities, businesses like golf courses and the environment are affected. For communities, the risk for infection is raised; for business owners there is a potential loss of

income through the withdrawal of clients; and within the environment organisms living in water die.

The turnover rate inhibits the attainment of organisational efficiency in processing wastewater in a manner that is healthy to the people of the municipality and friendly to the environment. In addition, the struggle to attain Green Drop certification is an indication of failing to implement best practices in the operation, control and management of wastewater treatment plants (East Rand Water, 2012: 27). The Green Drop programme, is an annual Department of Water and Sanitation initiative that assesses the quality of municipal water and awards certificates for those plants that achieve the expected levels of high quality.

Scholarly articles have been written about the generic reasons for employee turnover and the impact that it has on organisations. Sector-specific research regarding the topic has also been undertaken extensively in the health and education sectors in society. Such studies focusing, for example, on healthcare workers were conducted by Hogh, Hoel and Caneiro (2011: 742) who found a strong relationship between bullying and turnover. Farber (2010: 2) also conducted extensive research on why great teachers quit and how the exodus of teachers could be arrested. Similar to the study conducted by Farber (2010:12), it is the aim of this research to suggest ways in which the exodus of Plant Managers could be eliminated in the wastewater sector.

While the health and education sectors have done research on employee turnover, as indicated above, this study was prompted by the fact that not much attention has been focused on research about this topic in a wastewater environment, even though it is a key player in economic growth (Republic of South Africa, 2012: 3).

The research therefore aimed to assess employee turnover in the wastewater sector, by investigating the East Rand Water Care as an example.

1.3 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVES

The main research problem identified was the high turnover of young professionals in the wastewater treatment operations and the implications of the turnover for the East Rand Water Care. The implications were identified by looking at the impact that the turnover has had on the treatment works.

The research aimed to achieve the following specific objectives:

- To identify and assess the most common and unique reasons, within the sector, for the turnover among young professionals in the East Rand Water Care.
- To report on the effects of employee turnover among young professionals within the East Rand Water Care.
- To review the East Rand Water Care's internal organisational employee retention strategies.
- To recommend possible mechanisms that can implemented to reduce the high rate of turnover among young professionals in the East Rand Water Care.

1.4 RESEARCH LOGIC

The current study, as an empirical study, addressed a real life problem, namely the turnover rate of young professionals in the wastewater sector. The study aimed to describe phenomena in the life-worlds of the actors being studied and to generate inside viewpoints of the actors and their practices (Mouton, 2011:148). Existing data including both qualitative and quantitative data obtainable from reports and numerical figures contained in source documents were investigated in the study.

The design type employed in this study was the *case study* and a combination of *content and secondary data analysis* (Mouton, 2011: 143,144, 149). The limitations of the content analysis design concern how authentic the reports are.

1.5 RESEARCH PROCESS

Qualitative and quantitative techniques, Mouton (2011: 166) were used to analyse the content of the exit interview sheets of employees, employment equity and annual reports including *reports* compiled by the human resources department. The techniques were used in order to analyse the reasons young professionals left the employ of the company. Further content that was studied comprised data contained in the annual Green Drop reports for the nineteen (19) treatment plants from the Department of Water and Sanitation for the years 2011 and 2012.

The internal employment equity reports data, contained in the EEA2 template, for the two years under review were studied. The study of the EEA 2 employment equity template was conducted to gather data on the employees whose services were terminated from some human resources database as a result of voluntary turnover.

Qualitative data was gathered using structured individual interviews conducted with the Human Resources Executive Manager, three District Managers and seven Regional Managers under whose supervision the wastewater treatment plants operate were followed. These were conducted individually, with the managers being given a list of questions to respond to during the actual interviews.

An interview was also conducted with the Recruitment Manager in order for her to indicate the implications from a financial, productivity, knowledge management and resource investment perspective after the loss of an employee. The three Human Resources Management Consultants were interviewed to look at the role that the conditions of employment played in determining employee turnover.

Observation analyses of documentary sources were conducted to identify common reasons and trends in turnover by counting the frequencies of words and phrases that are related to reasons for turnover.

Data was collected through *one-on-one interviews* including a minimum of fifteen previous employees who could be successfully traced and through the studying of documentary sources. Fifteen interviews with respondents from the side of the employer were also conducted.

A *summary sheet* was used by the researcher to consolidate the information gathered from the managers and company documents and a report was findings developed.

1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

The topic of employee turnover in the wastewater industry had not been explored sufficiently to lay a foundation for this research and that is why the literature search had to rely largely on research involving other occupations and fields.

1.7 TIME FRAME

The study focused on employee turnover from the year 2011 to the end of 2012. The study was conducted over a three-month period as indicated in Table 1.1:

Table 1.1: Time frame for conducting the study

CHAPTER	THEMES	DURATION
1	Refer to 1.1 to 1.8	Completed
2	Complete literature review	Six weeks
3	Legislative and policy framework	Two weeks
4	Presentation and discussion of findings	Two weeks
5	Interpretation of results Conclusion of the study Recommendations	Three weeks

1.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter introduced the East Rand Water, the type of organisation that it is, the employee profile and its function of water purification. The rationale of the research was revealed as the notable trend of the resignations of key personnel.

The chapter identified the research problem as the high turnover of young Plant Managers with ERWAT. The objectives the research aimed to achieve were to identify the common and unique reasons for employee turnover; to report on the effects of the turnover phenomenon; to review the organisation's employee retention strategies and to recommend mechanisms for the reduction of turnover.

The designs to act as the blueprint of the research were identified in the chapter as the case study, content and secondary data analyses. Interviews; qualitative and quantitative methods were identified as tools that the research would utilise in data gathering and analysis. Lastly, the time frame for the research is outlined.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the causes of employee turnover from the early nineteen hundreds to the late nineteen hundreds. Further coverage of employee turnover

concepts and definitions that take into consideration different perspectives on how turnover is viewed by different audiences are also discussed. Classification of turnover and the subordinate types of voluntary turnover are discussed to deepen the insight into the research topic.

Three turnover models designed to help scholars understand the influence the brain, society and economics play in an employee to trigger turnover are also highlighted. The psychological model is discussed in detail because the individual's mental aspect plays a pivotal, if not the most critical role, in an individual's decision-making process. Gintis (2007: 1) distinguished "the mind as a decision making organ" in humans.

A number of generic and wastewater-related reasons that trigger turnover are discussed, followed by five major negative effects of employee turnover. The last part of the chapter proposes mechanisms that could be employed to curtail employee departure.

2.2 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

According to Al Sawafi (2012: 7), the employee turnover phenomenon is a human resources concept worldwide. He postulates coherently with Mobley, Horner and Hollingsworth's (1978: 408) meta-analytical confirmatory test, that employee turnover had been researched as early as the early nineteen hundreds, but research at the time could not differentiate between voluntary and involuntary turnover. In spite of that, progress had been made before the fifties as terminology like unavoidable turnover were used at that time and is still in use until this day.

In the sixties there was a lull regarding turnover research according to Al Sawafi (2012: 21) because of the shortages in labour supply as a result of falling birth rates and the consequent labour deficiencies which meant there was not much turnover to be investigated. In sharp contrast, the nineteen seventies are characterised by a hive of research regarding employee turnover, with a number

of turnover models being discussed. The reason for the surge in research, Al Sawafi (2012: 22) argues, was the development of technology that made communication and transportation of labour easy at the time.

In the eighties and nineties the understanding of turnover changed from focusing, for example, on the economic reasons behind the concept to the role played by labour market institutions (Al Sawafi, 2012: 21).

2.3 UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

According to Hom, Mitchell, Lee and Griffeth (2012: 831), “everyone eventually leaves; no one stays with the organization forever”. This is true and implies that employee turnover is part of the employment space that is inevitable in any work environment, irrespective of how and when it happens.

Shaw, Delery, Jenkins and Gupta (1998: 511) cite two major categories of turnover, namely:

- **Involuntary turnover**, and
- **Voluntary turnover**.

An instance of involuntary turnover, or discharge, according to Shaw *et al.* (1998: 511), reflects an employer’s decision to terminate the employment relationship. Shaw *et al.* (1998:511) view involuntary turnover as a result of retirement and death as uncontrollable. The controllable type, voluntary turnover, as this research will reveal, would be discussed and the uncontrollable would therefore not be a topic for discussion, as no intervention would prove successful in preventing it from happening.

2.3.1 Voluntary turnover defined

Voluntary employee turnover is the rotation of workers around the labour market; between firms, jobs and occupations; and between the states of employment and unemployment (Abassi & Hollman, 2000: 333).

Kirschenbaum and Mano-Negrin (1999: 1248), supported by Sun and Wang (2011: 27), Wright and Bonnet (1993: 149) and Shaw *et al.* (1998: 511) argue that voluntary turnover is an employee-initiated withdrawal or departure from an organisation. This is true as the word voluntary suggests that an employee deliberately chooses to leave.

A more pragmatic clarification of turnover by Mohr, Young and Burgess Jr. (2012: 222) describes the concept “as the number of employee departures over the last 12 months divided by the average number of annual employees”.

WeiBo, Kaur and Zhi (2010: 4148) give a managerial perspective of what turnover is perceived to be in management circles and calls it the whole process associated with getting a vacant position filled each time a position is voluntarily vacated until the appointment and training of a new incumbent.

2.3.2 Classification of voluntary turnover

Allen, Bryant and Vardaman (2010: 51) mention two types of turnover in relation to control and the reasons for their occurrence as:

2.3.2.1 Turnover relating to control

- **Avoidable turnover**

This type occurs because of reasons the employer may have a hand in influencing, like low job satisfaction, higher pay elsewhere and poor supervision (Allen *et al.*, 2010: 51). The researcher agrees that an employer can put measures in place to avoid and manage voluntary turnover by ensuring employee job satisfaction. In addressing the above, the employer would allocate work that is satisfactory to employees, while providing proper supervision; coaching; mentoring; and giving better and competitive salaries to employees.

- **Unavoidable turnover**

This occurs for reasons that the organisation may have no influence or very little control over. An example is when someone separates from the organisation for a health condition that makes the person unable or fit to continue working (Allen *et al.*, 2010: 51).

This is true as serious sicknesses may prevent workers from being able to continue working productively and contributing to an organisation's success.

2.3.2.2 Turnover relating to destination

De Croon, Sluiter, Blonk, Broersen and Frings-Dresen (2004: 442) distinguish two types of turnover relating to the destination of the departing employee.

- **Inter-occupational voluntary turnover**

This is described as a job movement to any job outside the industry and the occupational grouping.

- **Intra-occupational voluntary turnover**

This type refers to job movement within the occupational grouping and industry.

The researcher supports both assertions as employees who leave jobs for other forms of employment have a specific destination that could either be within the industry they are employed in or could be changing job groupings and going to work outside the industry.

2.3.2.3 Turnover relating to functionality

Abelson and Baysinger (1984: 331) distinguish two forms of turnover related to functionality.

- **Functional voluntary turnover**

This refers to separations that involve employees that the organisation would prefer to not keep anymore and losing such is internally looked at as no loss. Allen *et al.* (2010: 50) add to the explanation of what functional turnover is and posit that it is the departure of employees whose skills are easily replaceable. According to Allen *et al.* (2010: 50), it may even be beneficial in cases where poor performers leave but these authors in the same breath hasten to argue that functional voluntary turnover is also disruptive.

- **Dysfunctional voluntary turnover**

The dysfunctional turnover phenomenon is characterised by employees who have made a noteworthy contribution to the organisation through hard work and the loss of whom threatens the continued effectiveness of the organisation (Abelson & Baysinger, 1984: 331).

The loss of high performers would certainly affect an organisation's functionality, as their input would be missed.

2.3.3 Turnover models

Mor Barak, Nissly and Levin (2001: 628) enumerate three domains on which employee turnover models are built and within which they should be understood.

- Psychological domain and related models,
- Sociological domain and related models, and
- Economic domain and related models.

A psychological turnover model, an example of which is the unfolding theory conceptualised by Lee and Mitchell (1994: 62), will be discussed in detail to provide a better understanding of the mental complexities that lead to employees leaving an organisation.

2.3.3.1 The unfolding model

According to Lee, Mitchell, Wise and Fireman (1996: 6), the unfolding model comprises shocks to the system; the quantity of psychological analyses that pave the way for a decision to leave; and the actual act of leaving. The argumentation by Morrell and Arnold (2007: 1683) that departures are precipitated by abrupt events is consistent with the unfolding model's assertion of shocks.

Lee and Mitchell (1994: 60) define a shock to the system "to be a very distinguishable event that jars employees toward deliberate judgements about their jobs and, perhaps, to voluntarily quit their job".

Lee and Mitchell (1994: 60) further add that a shock must be sufficiently jarring so that it cannot be ignored and that by its very nature creates information that must be interpreted and assimilated into an individual's system of beliefs and images, because it has meaning about an employee's job.

A shock does not necessarily have to surprise an employee, as it could manifest as an expected or unexpected event in an on-going social system that jars an employee from a steady state about the individual's job (Lee & Mitchell, 1994: 61).

The shocking event needs the employee to pay attention and it does not necessarily bring negativity but whatever comes to the fore could be positive, neutral or negative (Lee & Mitchell, 1994: 61).

A frame of reference also called the decision frame is developed about the social and cognitive context that surrounds the experienced shock, and shortly after, the shock is given meaning through interpretation which could be a threat, anticipation, favourability or novelty (Lee & Mitchell, 1994: 61).

In the unfolding model, the second phase is personal, in that it determines whether the shock can be dealt with easily through a readily accessible and appropriate response, which could be informed by past actions the individual has had to take or previously known rules that were generated through the observation of others and personal knowledge that had been acquired in the past (Lee & Mitchell, 1994: 61).

The fact that, in the unfolding model of voluntary turnover, the shock that has been experienced together with the general and personal decision frames are the ones that trigger the beginning of a decision path (Lee & Mitchell, 1994: 61). Lee *et al.* (1996: 6) argue that there are four decision paths that present possible combinations of shocks or no shocks and the cognitive activities that follow, as shown in the Fortran- style flow diagram (Figure 2.1) that shows decision paths #1, #2 and #4.

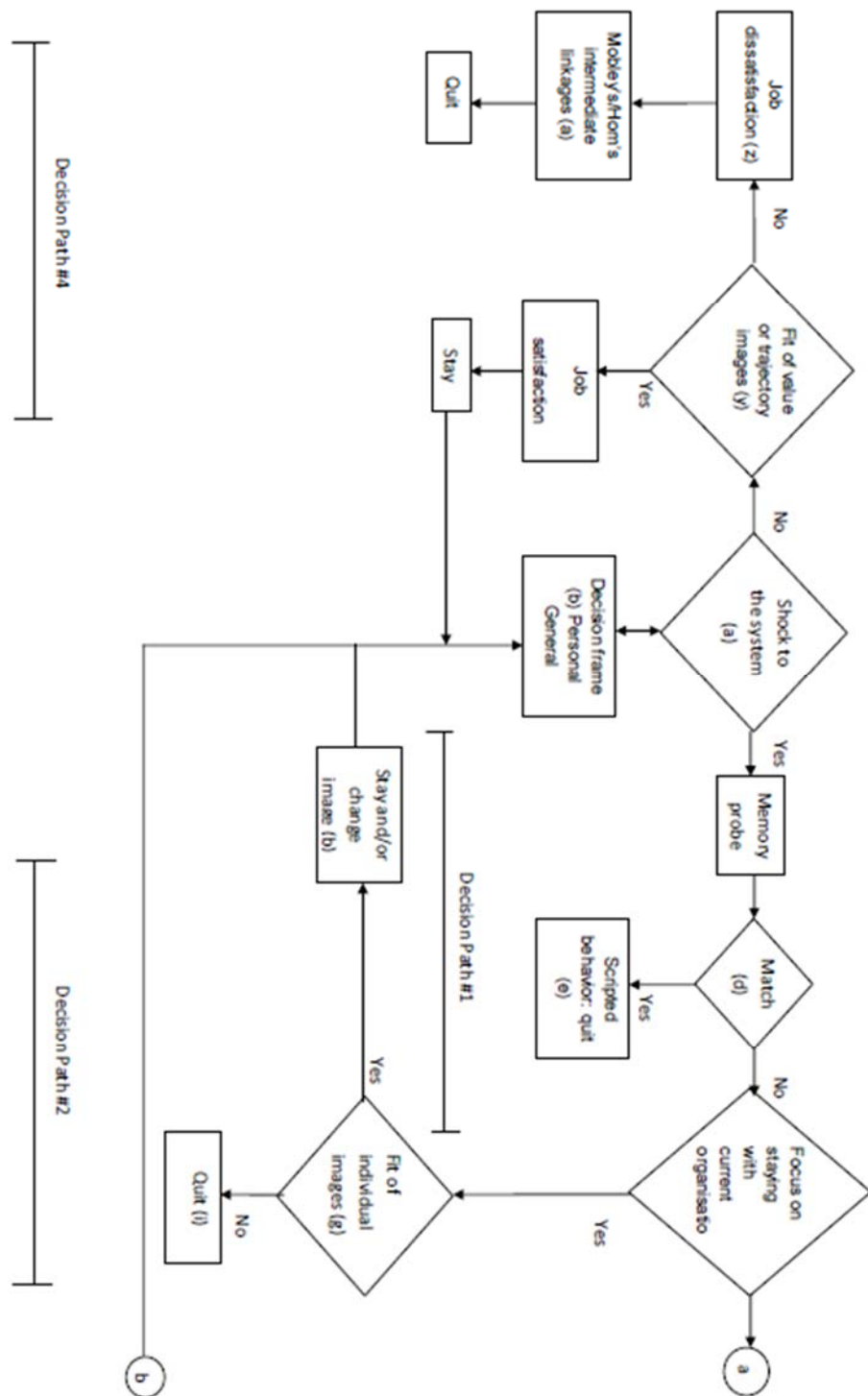


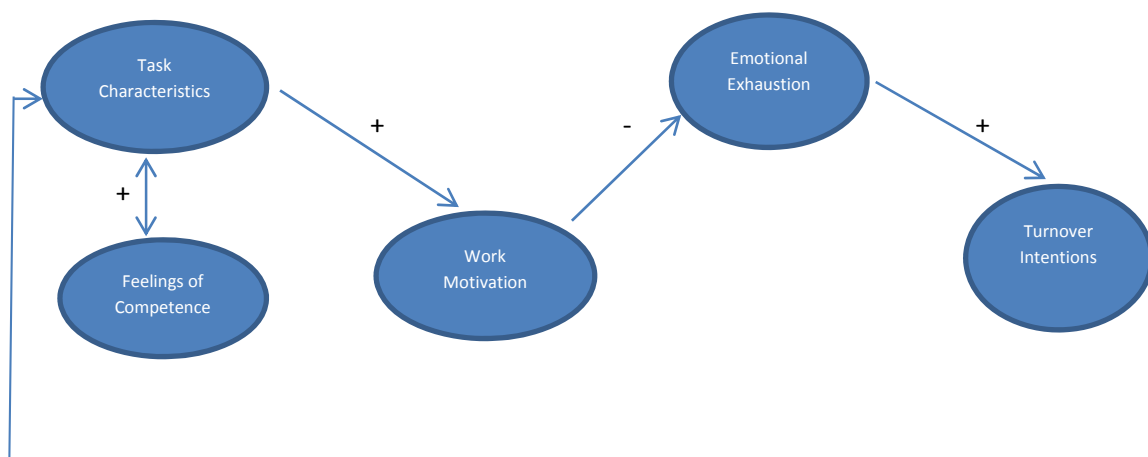
Figure 2.1: Fortran-style flow diagram showing the unfolding model (Lee and Mitchell: 1994:62)

An example of how the model works is seen by only looking at decision path #1 in the diagram. A shock occurs to the system (a), an employee relates to the event and interprets it (b), and (c), the employee looks to a reaction utilised to

respond to a similar situation in the past and draws on his frame of reference or images, finds that the reference matches (d) the script of what may have been learnt before; and the employee's behaviour that is scripted on his mind in a similar situation is to leave (e). If the past learning experience does not match the mental script, the employee would remain with the organisation (f).

2.3.3.2 The motivational model

According to Scott and Calhoun, as cited in Sieh (2012: 1348), sociology deals with the macro-social structure, analysis of organisational systems and social classes and dimensions around which societies are built on. The motivational model is one example of sociological theories which, according to Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 628), looks into human social behaviour. The theory, as illustrated in Figure 2.2, posits that good employee job design or task characteristics, and feelings of competence derived from positive verbal feedback from supervisors which increase the feelings of competence and feelings of relatedness borne by understanding between colleagues, positively influence work motivation (Richer, Blanchard & Vallerand, 2002: 2089). Work motivation breeds work satisfaction and helps in reducing emotional exhaustion that could potentially be brought on by conflict among organisational colleagues (Richer *et al.*, 2002: 2093). If emotional exhaustion occurs, it could lead to turnover intentions and, ultimately, to turnover (Richer *et al.*, 2002: 2090). On the other hand, work satisfaction would lessen the impact of turnover intentions and turnover.



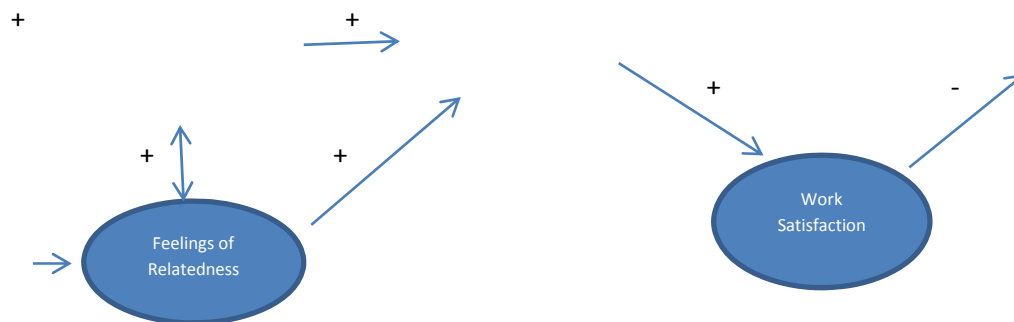


Figure 2.2: Motivational model of turnover (Blanchard *et al.*, 2002: 2091)

2.3.3.3 The economic model

This model posits that in the eyes of the economist “the employee’s decision about leaving or staying is the result of a rational cost-benefit assessment” (Mueller & Price, 1990: 322). According to Mueller and colleague if the benefits to costs ratio of remaining with the organization overshadow the same ratio in another workplace, the employee will not separate from his or her organization.

2.4 GENERIC REASONS FOR EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

In a review of the literature on employee turnover, Ongori (2007: 049) argues that “there is no standard reason why people leave organisations”. Therefore, an assortment of reasons why employee turnover exists and attribution of turnover cannot be placed on one locus. This is confirmed by Shaw *et al.* (1998: 511) who argue that the reasons that cause employees to leave employment are likely to be quite different.

While Ongori (2007: 049) posits an assortment of reasons as to why employees leave, Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski and Erez (2001: 1102) argue that researchers have only been able to provide partial answers as to why people leave organisations.

Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 629) support the existence of reasons and further assert that any turnover reason in the workplace can be located within the three categories discussed below:

2.4.1 Demographic factors

According to Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 629), the nature of demographic factors could be personal or work related. A number of demographic factors that cause employees to leave are highlighted below as a host of researchers have discussed this in various papers.

2.4.1.1 Personal reasons

Cited by Monte (2012: 1719), Cabrita and Helosia argue that “younger people are more likely to change jobs”. The reason for that, Monte (2012: 1719) argues, is “because younger people face lower mobility-costs than older employees, allowing them to search more easily for jobs that satisfy them”. This means the ease of movement in young employees is a cause of turnover.

This is supported by the researcher in that younger employees, when leaving jobs do not have to incur costs as their older counterparts who, for instance, have to relocate with their entire families and in the process end up expending a lot of finance in relocation. Younger employees, therefore, do not have complex issues when relocating, for instance children who might still be at school and relocating in the middle of the school year could mean a disruption in their schooling.

Another demographic factor that fits both personal and work-related reasons to turnover is what Sun and Wang (2011: 35) refer to as the current trend of careers that are not confined by the existence of boundaries among the younger generation and that the pattern is also characterised by ‘job hopping’.

This should be understood to mean that ease of movement of younger employees referred to by Sun and Wang (2011: 27), which is personal in nature, further exacerbates the reasons for turnover as it brings about the need in young employees to work outside their countries’ borders. The nature of the jobs that are not limited by borders is a work-related factor.

Boyas, Wind and Kang (2012: 50), citing Whitebook, Phillips and Howes, put forward another demographic reason for turnover by arguing that “some researchers have maintained that younger workers are more likely to leave because they may have more job alternatives, whereas older workers may lack other opportunities”.

In Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 630), Kiyak and colleagues argue that it is a known fact that better educated and younger employees that are less trained by and large are more likely to leave, compared to their older and less educated colleagues.

It is clear from the statement above that employers are willing to risk and hire younger and educated employees and that raises the frequency of young employees leaving jobs.

According to Boyas *et al.* (2012: 50), the lack of coping skills to deal with stress in young workers within the workplace is another reason that causes turnover.

Hom *et al.* (2012: 833) identify personal family factors as other reasons for turnover, arguing that many departures are induced by family.

One such example of personal and family pull factors that cause departure, according to Boyar, Valk, Maertz Jr. and Sinha (2011: 10), is “the pull of family normative financial obligations and the relative absence of such obligations on one’s salient turnover reasons”.

This is supported by the researcher as it is an accepted standard in some communities that the man of the house should provide for his family. The norms could prescribe that a married woman should not be economically active and female employees who enter into matrimonial unions could be compelled to relinquish their jobs if they had been working before marriage.

Boyar *et al.* (2011: 10) add that this could be true in countries high in collectivism where normative pressures exist and an employee could be required to prioritise family wishes and to take decisions consistent with the expectations of a family.

Hom *et al.* (2012: 833) add to the family discourse by positing that another factor that causes turnover is the pressure from spouses who put their partners under pressure to either relocate to a new environment or look after the family's children. Hom *et al.* (2012: 833) refer to this type of 'quitter' as a pre-planned leaver.

Adding to personal reasons for turnover is the argumentation presented by Muteswa and Ortlepp (2011: 14) who cite a lack of intrinsic rewards, and work-life balance as another reason for employee turnover.

An intrinsic reward is derived from the self, argues Reiss (2012: 152), and he that it concerns doing something for its own sake. Reiss (2012: 152) provides an example of a child who is intrinsically motivated who "plays baseball for no reason other than because that is what he wants to do". Therefore, intrinsic rewards result in employees being self-motivated in executing their duties, and a lack of such rewards could result in a lack of motivation and subsequently turnover.

Organisations that operate in a way that drains self-motivation from employees make it impossible for employees to strike a balance between their social and work life are more likely to lose their employees to voluntary turnover.

2.4.1.2 Work-related reasons

Monte (2012: 1722), supported by De Croon *et al.* (2004: 442), posits that stressful work results in psychological strain which causes employees to show behavioural reactions that lead to turnover.

Ongori (2007: 050), linking his reasoning to the stress discourse, fingers role stressors as other reasons that lead to employee turnover. Examples of role stressors are clarified by Ongori (2007: 050) as *role ambiguity* and *role clarity*, the former being the difference between what an employee thinks his or her job entails and what others expect the employee to be doing in executing his or her job properly.

Such a situation, according to Ongori (2007: 050), results in uncertainty on the side of the employee as to what exactly he or she should be doing in the light of other employees' perspectives and the employee's own perceptions about their job. Role clarity for each employee, argues Ongori (2007: 050), needs to be spelt out by management and supervisors to avoid role ambiguity, because if the roles employees need to play are not clearly defined, employees would not know what is expected of them and would leave because of the frustration that comes with a lack of clarity.

Wright and Cropanzano (1998: 486) argue that another reason that leads to turnover are job demands that lead to fatigue and emotional exhaustion. According to Wright and Cropanzano (1998: 492), the job demands lead to employees exhibiting diminished job performance and eventually leaving their jobs.

It is obvious that employees may decide to leave the jobs that cause them strain and fatigue when they suffer from stress and exhaustion.

According to Michaels and Spector (1982: 54), another work-related factor that leads to turnover, results when an employee discovers that a job is not what he or she believed it would be. Maertz, in Griffeth and Hom (2004: 109), add that "people want to continue doing things that make them feel good". This is true as an employee at times would think the job entails challenging work and at a later stage learn that it is not as interesting as they thought it would be when it captured their attention.

A study by Boyar *et al.* (2011: 12) adds several other work-related reasons like:

- Job content,
- Relationship with colleagues,
- Managerial support,

Griffeth, Hom and Gaertner (2000: 483) corroborate the position of Boyar *et al.* (2011: 12) by mentioning three of the above determinants, arguing that characteristics of the work environment such as job content; work group

cohesion; leadership do cause turnover and the authors add lack of autonomy and promotional chances as other causes.

The argumentation on autonomy is supported by Aarons *et al.* (2010: 277) and Heavey, Holwerda and Hausknecht (2013: 413) who agree that decreasing job autonomy by implementing an inflexible organisational work structure increases the chances of employee turnover. Identifying another reason for turnover, Maltarich, Nyberg and Reilly (2010: 1058) found out that “employees will leave jobs where there is a mismatch between their cognitive ability and the cognitive demands of the job”.

Maltarich *et al.* (2010: 1058) further argue existence of pull and push factors that cause voluntary employee turnover. Maltarich *et al.* (2010: 1060) posit that “we expect pull forces to apply more strongly to workers whose cognitive ability exceeds the cognitive demands of their job”. They (2010: 1060) further explain the previous statement by adding that “high cognitive ability employees will more likely leave jobs with low rather than medium cognitive demands”. Maltarich *et al.* (2010: 1060) add that “those with abilities greater than those required for the job may feel bored, and the job may not hold their interest”.

This should be understood to suggest that, if the employee’s expertise is above the requirements of his current position, there is a strong likelihood that the employee may leave the job and look for an alternative that would meet his higher level of proficiency. On the other side of the coin, the statement also means if an employee is employed to perform a job above his capabilities that employee might leave because he or she cannot meet the higher demands of the job at hand.

Regarding the push factors referred to above, this could manifest when an employee is not performing well and the organisation pushes such an employee out by withholding positive rewards and providing negative feedback (Maltarich *et al.*, 2010: 1060). The negative feedback could be received by an employee performing below expectations during performance reviews that are used to appraise employee performance, which ultimately culminate in the awarding of incentives in the form of bonus payments by the employer. When such an employee does not receive rewards he may feel disowned and ostracized within

the organisation, which could lead to further demotivation and the decision to leave voluntarily.

To validate the point around push factors, Wright and Bonnet (1993: 151) argue that poor performers engage in alternative searches because of the feelings of being unwanted by the organisation. Such job searches result in offers and the acceptance of such offers by the applicant, and that leads to turnover.

Arguments consistent with those of Maltarich *et al.* (2010: 1060) argued by Chatman, in Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1104), posit that “when organizational entry produced poor person-organization fit, employees were likely to leave an organization”.

The argument by Wright and Bonnet (1993: 150) about the Person-Environment (P-E) Fit Theory suggests that “an incongruent relationship between individual and organizational demands leads initially to job stress, as found by Monte (2012: 1722) and (De Croon *et al.*, 2004: 442). Subsequently, Wright and Bonnet (1993: 150) argue, it leads to potentially maladaptive outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, decreases in work performance, and increases in absenteeism and turnover”.

Regarding personal employee perceptions about the work situation, managerial support and turnover, Nishii and Mayer (2009: 1421) posit that,

...if a follower perceives that his manager has chosen to focus her energy on other, more needy followers, the effect of having a low-quality relationship with his manager may be less damaging to him than if he were to perceive that his manager had opted not to develop a high-quality relationship with him because she did not value him, his background or his personality.

Nishii and Mayer (2009: 1421) argue that that the perception of the employee about the unpleasant work situation would result in the employee’s morale being lowered; diminishing self-worth, feelings of rejection, and withdrawal from work and colleagues, all of which could result in employee turnover.

2.4.2 Professional perceptions

Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 629) argue that professional perceptions include job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Spector, in Monte (2012: 1719), postulates that satisfaction is “how people feel about their jobs and different aspects related to them”.

An addition by Spector in Monte (2012: 1718), postulates that “in general, previous studies have shown a direct relationship between job satisfaction and turnover”. Griffeth *et al.* (2000: 483) argue in agreement with Spector, positing that a resolution to depart is triggered by job dissatisfaction.

Sun and Wang (2011: 28), in support of Allen, Weeks and Moffit (2005: 980), further add that dissatisfaction with one’s current job may result in an employee searching for a more satisfying occupation. Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1102) confirm the argument around job dissatisfaction by arguing that “more specifically, given alternatives, people stay if they are satisfied with their jobs and [are] committed to their organizations and leave if they aren’t”.

Professional perceptions leading to turnover also speak to the notion of a lack of organisational commitment by employees, as argued by Mitchell (2001: 1102). Bentein, Vandenberg, Vandenberghe and Stinglhamber (2005: 469) differentiate between the following three (3) forms of commitment that, if lacking in employees, could lead to turnover:

2.4.2.1 Affective commitment (AC)

This form of commitment represents the notion that the employee’s commitment to the institution is determined simply by personal identification with and an emotional attachment to the organisation. According to Bentein *et al.* (2005: 469), in the affective commitment scenario the employee’s mentality is characterised by a personal longing to pursue a particular course of action, which is to stay within the organisation.

Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1106) add that “affective commitment reflects one’s liking for a job and emotional attachment to an organization”. Mitchell and colleagues argue that employees remain with the employer because they have positive

affect and feelings about the organisation. In the absence of affective commitment, employees would quit.

2.4.2.2 Normative commitment (NC)

In the case of normative commitment, according to Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1106), an employee feels or has a perception that suggests that he or she has a moral obligation to follow a particular course of action and that would be to remain with the organisation. Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1106) posit that, with normative commitment, employees stay because they feel they ought to. Where employees do not feel that they ought to be with the organisation, voluntary turnover would be the result.

2.4.2.3 Continuance commitment (CC)

Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1106) argue that continuance commitment reflects an attachment based on the likely benefits the employee perceives he or she would give up if he/she does not continue working for the institution. If an employee feels that he/she will not have an income if he/she chooses to terminate employment with the organisation the employee would most probably continue with the organisation, hence the usage of the term continuance. If there are no benefits to lose or benefits could be replaced, an employee would leave.

The above three forms of attachment are strands that constitute organisational commitment. Bentein *et al.* (2005: 468) explain that the commitment to the organisation is nurtured through the strengthening of psychological links that culminate in the commitment of the employee to the organisation. Bentein and colleagues further state that the links could either be weakened in the exchanges between the employee and the employer.

As the links are weakened, say Bentein *et al.* (2005: 468), the chances of becoming less committed and engaging in the process of turnover are heightened.

2.4.3 Organisational Conditions

Organisational conditions include fairness with regard to compensation and the culture of the organisation (Mor Barak *et al.*, 2001: 630).

2.4.3.1 Fairness

Fairness is also referred to as distributive justice by Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 629), who postulate that perceived inequity in the workplace generates feelings of resentment amongst employees and also between the managing team and employees. An example is a situation where there are disparities in the wages of employees in the same category. Resulting bitterness amongst employees could negatively affect employee relations and spread throughout the entire environment, creating to an unpleasant workplace. The perceived inequity could, according to Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 629) result in higher rates of absenteeism, poor commitment to the organization and amplified turnover intentions which could later lead to actual quits.

2.4.3.2 Compensation and failure to meet expectations

Another dimension presented by Aarons *et al.* (2009: 271) indicates that turnover attribution in the public sector has been blamed on organisational elements such as low salaries. Messersmith, Guthrie, Ji and Lee (2011: 457) specify that the motivation to leave because of pay could be linked to certain organisational pay characteristics, of which low salaries could be one.

Wright and Bonnet (1993: 151) add that high turnover of high performers is results from an organisation's failure to meet their expectations of higher incentives that match their output. Mano-Negrin and Tzafrir (2004: 455) argue that, if employees perceive the salary each one of them gets as not proportionate to the work effort they put in, this can lead to employee attrition. Allen *et al.* (2010: 52) argue that 'it is true that compensation matters for retention, and employees often leave the organization to take higher paying job elsewhere'.

2.4.3.3 Organisational Trends

Coming to organisational trends, Shaw *et al.* (1998: 512) posit that “in an organization with high quit rates, for various reasons employees find it more attractive to leave than to stay”. The statement should be construed to mean that employees observe the trend of departure and will, at times, do the same, even if there is no tangible reason to leave, presumably feeling that other employees would never leave for no apparent reason.

2.4.3.4 Competition

Muteswa and Ortlepp (2011: 13), in support of Samuel and Chipunza (2009: 410) found that competition for skills among South African organisations, international and multinational organisations looking for talented employees, brings about employee turnover.

As a result of the standardisation and adoption of world best practices by South Africa in different fields, it becomes easy for employees to fit into any working system and overseas countries then scout for talent in the country, offering salaries and incentives in foreign and stronger currencies that are beyond the reach of the local market, thereby resulting in high employee turnover in workplaces (Muteswa & Ortlepp, 2011: 13).

Linked to this competition, Smith, in Allen *et al.* (2010: 48) adds that “aggressive recruitment of valuable employees still occurs”. The contribution by Samuel and Chipunza (2009: 410) validates the aggression in recruitment, arguing that “today’s business environment has become very competitive thus making skilled employees the major differentiating factor for most organisations”.

It is clear that poaching of skilled workers by an organisation’s competitors is still rife in the marketplace and the competition for skills to enhance competitive advantage is an everyday phenomenon, with highly skilled employees being lured away from their employers with offers of high pay and benefits. Competition and poaching of staff amongst organisations thus contribute to turnover.

2.4.3.5 Extrinsic rewards

The use in organisations of a commission-based pay system and short-term performance pressures were identified by Batt and Colvin (2011: 710) as reasons for employees to leave. In such employees are pressured to perform to earn more and when they cannot reach the set targets they earn less and may decide to leave because of the high pressure and the reward system.

2.4.3.6 Leadership style and team dynamics

DuBrin (2010: 112) describes leadership style as “the relatively consistent pattern of behaviour that characterizes a leader”.

Regarding leadership within organisations, Batt and Colvin (2011: 698) argue that institutions with a leadership style that exercises strict performance monitoring, places higher expectations on employees and provides more onerous working conditions, are likely to lose their employees. Batt and Colvin (2011: 698-699) identify the reason for the higher departure rates as that employees view persistent electronic monitoring of their work progress as an invasion of their private space and an indication of distrust by the employer. This is supported by Aarons *et al.* (2010: 277) and Heavey, Holwerda and Hausknecht (2013: 413), who argue that direct observation of employees leads to turnover and poor staff retention.

Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 632), supported by Aarons *et al.* (2009: 271), assert that workers who remain with the organisation confirm that they are supervised by managers who listen when they report work-related problems and who are able to provide support when things become tough in the workplace. From what Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 632) argue, it can be learnt that employees who are poorly supervised and poorly supported eventually will leave.

Linking leadership and team dynamics, Muteswa and Ortlepp (2011: 14) attribute the reason for employee turnover to “due to the existence of a poor relationship between the employee and his / her immediate manager”. The poor nature of the relationship results in the departure of the employee. Garner and Hunter (2013: 197) intimate the importance of supervisor and co-worker support and that a lack thereof causes employees to leave.

Validating the argumentation surrounding team relationships, Mehdi, Raju and Mukherji (2012: 42) intimate that “the role of the immediate supervisor in an employee’s decision to leave has been found to be one of the major causes of attrition”. They continue with “Not only do ‘bad bosses’ trigger higher rates of attrition, their ill-mannered behavior spreads like wildfire” (Mehdi *et al.*, 2012: 43).

The reader should understand this statement to imply that if one leadership or supervision style involves bad behaviour towards subordinates, the whole work environment could be contaminated with such undesirable behaviour, which may mean that employees who feel uncomfortable with the situation leave.

Mano-Negrin and Tzafrir (2004: 455) add another reason to the team dynamics debate, positing exposure to negative acts and labelling within working groups as prompting departure. According to Mano-Negrin and Tzafrir (2004: 455) poor relationships, labelling and exposure to negative acts are organisational work attitudes.

Hogh *et al.* (2011: 748) specify bullying as a negative act to which turnover can be attributed, arguing that “being persistently exposed to negative acts and consequently labelling the experience as bullying, trigger the psychological processes that ultimately lead to the person leaving the organization”.

This is true as employees could be bullied by their supervisors, or by older and fellow employees who hold a certain form of power over them, so that the bullied employee would eventually leave the organisation.

Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 652) cite the lack of organisational social support amongst teams as another reason for turnover. Instead of bullying and labelling, employees need to support each other. If they do not offer support, those who do not get support from their colleagues would leave.

2.4.3.7 Imposition of a quantitative approach to managing employees

Ongori (2007: 050) argues that managing through the imposition of a quantitative approach would lead to disenchantment among employees. According to Buffington (2009: 1), organisations that perpetuate a command-

and-control management style risk losing their employees, especially those who are committed to high performance.

It should be understood that employees come from diverse backgrounds, respond to different stimuli and each one is unique and as a result a one-size-fits-all approach in their management could lead to unhappiness and turnover.

2.4.3.8 Human resources practices and adverse working conditions

Batt and Colvin (2011: 697) say that employees leave when they are not satisfied by the organisation's human resources practices and the conditions under which they are working. Mano-Negrin and Tzafrir (2004: 455) give an example of unfavourable hiring policies applied by human resources as a reason for turnover. The policies could be designed to favour external candidates at the expense of internal candidates who deserve promotional opportunities.

2.4.3.9 Development opportunities

Opportunities for professional development should be made available for employees. In this regard, Mano-Negrin (2004: 455) argues that managers "often neglect employees' needs for self-advancement and development, which are linked to their work-related opportunities". It could be deduced from this statement that the absence of such opportunities has the potential of inducing employees to leave the organisation. An example would be the manager's lack of confidence in giving employees challenging tasks and take the safe option of outsourcing complex work than take risks.

2.4.3.10 Mismanaging organisational change

Morrel, Loan-Clarke and Wilkinson (2004: 163) found the mismanagement of change in the organisation to be another reason for employees choosing to leave. Morrel *et al.* (20014: 171) point out that implementing change may result in changes in people's working patterns and employees who are caught by surprise in the change process, may find themselves struggling to adapt, which may lead to employees finding themselves unsettled and leaving. An example

would be when management do not present a compelling case, need and value for change management which employees could embrace, with the concept getting misunderstood and yielding unintended consequences of employee turnover.

2.4.3.11 Organisational environment and economics

Another finding by Monte (2012: 1718) is that “an organization’s environment has significant effects on its workers and some of those effects are reflected in how a worker feels about their job”. Cited in Monte (2012: 1718) Herzberg, Mausner and Syderman agree with the above, arguing that “the main reason why workers are dissatisfied at work relates to the environment within which they work”.

Chiaburu and Harrison (2008: 1082) argue that “individuals in every type of organisation have co-workers who are partners in social and task interactions”. Chiaburu and Harrison (2008: 1082) point out that an important question about how co-workers make the work environment a milieu conducive to helping individual employees to thrive in their roles is not frequently asked in research circles and therefore never answered. The environment can either be made volatile, prompting other employees to leave, or peaceful by the employees who work in that organisation.

Donoghue and Castle (2007: 361) add another dimension by purporting that, in addition to the employees’ perception about the organisational environment as a cause of turnover, economic conditions can also lead to voluntary turnover.

To confirm the argument surrounding economic reasons as a cause of turnover, Allen *et al.* (2010: 48-49) posit that “coupled with the likelihood that many current employees may remain with their organizations only because there are fewer external opportunities, the possibility exists for substantial pent-up turnover to occur when labor markets become more favourable for employees”.

Economic reasons could present themselves at the organisational or at the personal level where an organisation would struggle to make a profit and

remunerate its employees adequately, with the result that employees would leave.

The influence of economic conditions is further corroborated by Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 628) who argue that “economic theoretical explanations of turnover are based on the premise that employees respond with rational actions to various economic and organizational conditions”. An example would be an organisation where employees belong to opposing cliques and where employees are not satisfied with their remuneration because the salaries are not comparable to those of similar organisations.

2.4.3.12 Organizational instability

According to Ongori (2007: 050), when conditions in organisations are not stable, employees tend to leave and look for stable organisations because of being able to predict their career advancement in stable organisations.

2.4.3.13 Organisational Inefficiency

According to the thesaurus dictionary, (<http://www.dictionary.com>), efficiency means “performing or functioning in the best possible manner with least waste of time and effort, having and using the requisite knowledge and skill”. When an organisation is not efficient, employees will leave (Ongori, 2007: 050).

2.4.3.14 Communication

According to Ongori (2007: 050), employees have a strong need to be informed. Employees who are not informed when decisions are taken that would impact the manner in which they work and affect their livelihood will become unsettled and leave. Ongori (2007: 050) continues to say that the likelihood of continuity is reduced in the absence of transparency in sharing information with employees and their empowerment.

Chen and Bliese, in Avolio, Zhu and Bhatia (2004: 955) corroborate the argumentation by Ongori (2007: 050), positing that physical proximity between leaders and followers may facilitate the quality of communication between leader and followers, while physical distance may decrease the direct influence.

2.5 WASTEWATER SECTOR-RELATED REASONS FOR EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

1. According to Snow and Mutschler (2012: 4), one reason for turnover in the sector is that the people who work in the operations do so in obscurity and are often not respected.

Snow and Mutschler (2012: 1), supporting Boepple-Swider (2008: 133), weigh in on the above assertion and cite the findings of the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission that view the reasons for turnover in the wastewater sector as the under-appreciation of the industry and profession.

When people feel they are not respected and recognised by others because of the job they are doing, the self-esteem requirement according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs is impacted on negatively. The employee may decide to leave and look for employment that would raise their esteem level.

2. The Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 12) posits that in "wastewater treatment, there is the consensus that younger workers value a work/life balance and that rotating 12-hour shifts and on-call duty does not accommodate their lifestyles". The research adds that wastewater workers despise shift work and on-call responsibilities.

Snow and Mutschler (2012: 5) point out that workers in the wastewater works are expected to be on call for nights and weekends during plant malfunctions, holidays; emergencies, as in cases when a storm surges and causes large amounts of wastewater to flow, exceeding the plant's capacity argues.

This corroborates the argumentation put forward earlier by Muteswa and Ortlepp (2011: 14) that showed that work-life imbalance cause employee turnover in that plant managers have to be available during the day; at night; during emergencies and during holidays to attend to the works that cannot be left unattended.

3. Snow and Mutschler (2012: 5) list another reason as the unappealing conditions and environment in and under which employees in a wastewater

works operate. This is true as the smelly stench is always present in and around the works and the likelihood of employees recovering dead bodies of animals and human bodies, at times, cannot be ruled out, together with the everyday exposure to faecal material.

4. Another reason for leaving, according to Snow and Mutschler (2012: 5), is that the work is physically demanding. This can lead to fatigue and when employees cannot take the weariness any more, the worker may leave.

5. Snow and Mutschler (2012: 5) also add that there is a strong “presence of hazardous conditions, such as slippery walkways, dangerous gases and malfunctioning equipment” in wastewater plants. The conditions could put the lives of employees at risk as employees could slip and sustain injuries, inhale poisonous gases and be exposed to faulty equipment that could lead to electrocution, if the equipment uses electricity, all of which could lead to death. Such conditions may lead to employees leaving for fear of their safety. Boepple-Swider (2008: 132) argues that large numbers of water and wastewater utility employees leave to seek opportunities elsewhere because of reasons cited above.

6. Mining and oil industries are cited in Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 15) as the culprits that normally poach employees in the wastewater field. Opportunities for those who choose to leave are made available by what Brookhart (2008: 7106) cites as competition in the industry, which comes with the increased private operation of wastewater treatment plants leading to employees quitting to join other organisations in the same field.

The competition and departure of employees is corroborated by the Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 15) that found “smaller municipalities lose top talent to larger municipalities that offer greater career growth and better pay”. According to Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 11) competition thus leads to managers being poached by surrounding municipalities, especially when they have acquired more skills.

7. Another reason is that “workers who have a well-rounded skill set have an easier time finding employment in the private sector” (Environmental Labour

Market Research, 2010: 15). The Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 15) further postulates yet another reason for young employee turnover as undervaluing of company loyalty compared to older workers.

8. Boepple-Swider (2008: 133) also listed low pay as a trigger for turnover and added lack of support from colleagues and supervisors and lack of professional development opportunities as other reasons for turnover.

9. The Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 5) found that the training resources available in wastewater works are insufficient to maintain training for the professional development of employees. To add, the Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 11) argues that “all aspects of water and wastewater treatment are grossly underfunded” and that “municipalities are often only in a position to provide funds for the bare minimum training required” (Environmental Labour Market Research, 2010: 14). An employee would leave an organisation that has insufficient budget to equip employees with training.

10. The other reason listed by the Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 5) is the lack of clarity in career paths, which makes it difficult for employees to map their careers and advance internally. The training and development of employees tend to focus on technical features of the industry, ignoring important aspects like communication and administration. This does not address the soft skills that the managers’ immediate supervisors need to have in order to be able to consult and inform employees, which could result in misunderstandings and a number of things going wrong.

2.6 NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF TURNOVER IN THE WASTEWATER SECTOR

2.6.1 Disruptions

The effect of turnover, according to Allen, Bryant and Vardaman (2010: 48), is that it is disruptive. Some of the disruptions referred to by Allen and colleagues, according to Mooney, Holahan and Amason (2007: 738), are cognitive or task and affective or emotional conflicts. These, according to Mooney *et al.* (2007: 733), would emanate for example when new employees discuss options and preferences concerning tasks in which consensus would have been reached

easily by the previous team members. Personal conflicts would also cause disruption as the new team would not have blended well Mooney *et al.* (2007: 733).

Becker and Cropanzano (2011: 233) also argue that turnover is disruptive to the work groupings within a company as employees in some institutions are clustered in units within departments that perform similar or related tasks to contribute to the overall value chain in order to deliver on the objectives of the specific organization. Mohr, Young and Burgess (2012: 217) supported Batt and Colvin (2011: 695) concerning the fact that “from the perspective of a knowledge-based theory, turnover can cause operational disruptions during the period of time when replacement employees are trying to acquire the tacit knowledge needed to perform their jobs”.

Mohr *et al.* (2012: 217) and Boyar *et al.* (2011: 18) explain that tacit knowledge is a set of mental models that reside within an individual; that employees know about the organisation for which they work and its internal procedures, whose transfer from one individual to the next is slow, costly and uncertain. It cannot be conveyed through written documents or in a classroom situation but is acquired through work experience within the organisation Boyar *et al.* (2011: 18). The assertion by Mohr and colleagues about the transfer of tacit knowledge in arguing that human capital resides within an individual and that is why it cannot be transferred easily and to do so needs a long term investment on an employee is supported by Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 627).

The knowledge of standard company operating procedures and the manner in which to respond to certain work situations that were well understood and executed by the employee who had left cannot be replaced with the appointment of a new incumbent and should normally take time to be inculcated to someone new in a position. That type of expertise that is lost cannot be replaced and can also not be claimed back by the company that had invested much time getting the employee to understand the manner in which the company operates.

2.6.2 Inhibited internal operating culture

Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 627) and Aarons *et al.* (2009: 270), with the latter citing Gray, Phillips and Normand supported by Dess and Shaw, as cited in Morrel and Arnold (2007: 1684) agree that employee turnover impacts negatively on the internal operating culture, and affects staff morale which, in turn, impedes the effectiveness of an organisation.

2.6.3 Declining organisational performance

The disruptions and inhibitions cited above could lead to declining organisational performance. Mehdi *et al.* (2012: 42), like Sun and Wang (2011: 24), argue that employee turnover is an important management concern as the loss of key employees affects an organisation's performance negatively.

Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 627) lend credence to the performance argumentation, positing that it has a negative impact on short- and long-term productivity of an organisation.

In order to make up for low productivity, Ongori (2007: 051) and Allen *et al.* (2010: 51) agree that the required output could be maintained at the cost of overtime payment, for which employees who know the job very well would have to fill the gap and work extra hours for which the employer would have to pay.

2.6.4 Quantifiable and unquantifiable costs and, or losses

Izzo and Withers (2002: 54) are supported by Ongori (2007: 051), Tuzun and Kalemci (2011: 518) and Mehdi *et al.* (2012: 42), who agree that other losses that accompany an employee's departure are intangible and quantifiable costs.

Braddock and Mitchell, cited in Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 627), who is supported by Izzo and Withers, (2002: 54) and Allen *et al.* (2010: 43), corroborate the notion of quantifiable costs, with the former arguing that

...the direct costs of employee turnover are typically grouped into three main categories: separation costs (exit interviews, administration, functions related to terminations, separation pay, and unemployment tax), replacement costs (communicating job vacancies, pre-employment administrative functions,

interviews, and exams), and training costs (formal classroom training and on-the-job instruction).

Mitchell *et al.* (2001:1102) concede about the existence of organisational costs and add that employees themselves who leave have to face personal costs as well, and that the costs are often very high.

Taking into consideration the increasing investment in the training of employees by companies because of the positive impact that relevant training has on the growth of an organisation, the effect of employee turnover is that “a company loses all of its investment should an employee terminate the relationship upon completion of training” (Brum, 2007: 1).

As a result of the completion of the training and proliferation of new employment prospects, the greater the likelihood for an employee to turnover, Brum (2007: 1) continues, “the less likely the company will invest in training of its employees”. Employee turnover could therefore cause an organisation to invest less in training, resulting in employees having to incur personal costs for self-development.

Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 627) agree that turnover also has intangible costs that are more difficult to quantify. These include:

- The loss of sharpness in employees before they depart.

Findings by Snow and Mutschler (2012: 1) in their study titled ‘Promoting Entry to Career Pathways in the Drinking Water and Wastewater Sector’ are in agreement with Allen *et al.* (2010: 48) and the Environmental Labour Market Research (2007: 15) in arguing that turnover brings about

- Brain drain or loss of expertise and experienced mentors in running wastewater operations safely and in compliance with municipal laws.

Brain drain is also corroborated as an unquantifiable cost by Dess and Shaw in Morrel and Arnold (2007: 1684), supporting the argumentation by Allen *et al.* (2010: 48) who fingered the loss of organisational memory.

The talent lost to multinational organisations results in brain drain within organisations and in developing countries where people who are supposed to be leaders driving economic development and social change are poached by multinational companies (Jones, 2001: 4).

Additional unquantifiable costs, hard to value in monetary terms, according to Allen *et al.* (2005: 980), are,

- Psychological costs, which are the loss of valued work relationships.

The fact that the person had solid relationships in the work environment he or she is now departing from and now has to invest energy in order to develop new associations is also costly, but the cost cannot be quantified.

2.6.5 Shallow candidate pools

The Environmental Labour Market Research (2007: 4) argues that turnover results in shallow candidate pools from which employers can recruit, making recruitment increasingly difficult, and the drying of the pool could possibly be caused by the brain drain.

Abrahams (2004: 19) joins in on the scarcity of employees arguing that the high rates of employee turnover worsen the impact of a declining pool of employees. Snow and Mutschler (2012: 7) add that turnover results in high vacancy rates which the sector needs to eradicate.

This is supported by the current research, which found that unfilled vacancies grow when Plant managers leave the wastewater works to take employment outside the sector, which De Croon *et al.* (2004: 442) earlier referred to as interoccupational turnover, and the shortages are further exacerbated through family pull factors as discussed earlier by Valk, Maertz and Sinha (2011:10).

Morrel and Arnold (2007: 1684), Allen *et al.* (2010: 51) and Aarons *et al.* (2009) argue that employee turnover results in staffing problems that are then resolved through reliance on temporary workers who are recruited through employment agencies which is a short-term arrangement.

The high vacancy rate, according to Boepple-Swider (2008: 135), leads to employers in the wastewater sector opting for the services of retired managers to address the shortage.

2.6.6 Mismanagement of wastewater works

Snow and Mutschler (2012: 4), supported by the Environmental Labour Market Research (2007: 7), also argue that turnover at times results in plants landing in bad hands because of the declining pool, with the resultant mismanagement of wastewater works leading to the deterioration, compromise and degradation of public health and the environment. Boepple-Swider (2008: 135) adds that bad handling of the plants lead to accelerated aging of the wastewater infrastructure, which in turn brings about workforce challenges. When the infrastructure collapses, regular maintenance is required and the implications of constant repairs are more technicians, which will come at a cost.

The degradation of public health would result in the customers or the public becoming dissatisfied with poor delivery of services, in that the infrastructure could be leaking of dirty water with faecal material. The faecal matter could lead to outbreaks of diseases emanating from municipal infrastructure meant to provide proper sanitation for citizens not being properly maintained to ensure adequate sanitation services are delivered. Batt and Colvin (2011: 710) and Hausknecht, Trevor and Howard (2009: 1068) argue that customers of organisations that experience high turnover rates are less satisfied with the services they receive from employees. Abrahams, (2004: 19) agrees, arguing that the failure to reduce the trend in turnover impacts negatively on the rendition of services.

The reason for dissatisfaction, according to Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 627) and Samuel and Chipunza (2009: 411), is the quality of services that are compromised that cripple customer care and satisfaction. Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 626) lend credence to the customer satisfaction discourse, arguing that turnover has grave implications in terms of the quality, stability and consistency of services provided to the organisation's customers. Customer dissatisfaction can only mean one thing and that is public outcry at the treatment meted out to

citizens by the relevant authorities, especially when they are dependent on local government only for such services.

2.7 CURBING TURNOVER IN THE WASTEWATER SECTOR

Samuel and Chipunza (2009: 410) argue that employee turnover is a serious concern to managers worldwide and the retention of skilled employees is of high importance to the continued life of organisations.

Allen *et al.* (2010: 48) support this assertion and argue that “many organizations are also increasingly concerned about their ability to retain key employees (e.g. high performers and employees with high-demand or difficult-to-replace skill sets)”.

Samuel and Chipunza (2009: 411) postulate that replacing employees with skills is problematic. This implies that organizations need to ensure that talent worth retaining is kept. According to Samuel and Chipunza (2009: 411) the major reason for instituting efforts to retain employees is to prevent the loss of valuable employees from the organisation as that could detrimentally impact levels of productivity and the provisioning of services.

A negative aspect of the management of employee turnover pointed out by Mehdi *et al.* (2012: 42) is that managers think about curbing the scourge after the resignation and by that time it is already too late. Abrahams (2004: 19) argues that measures need to be taken to curb the problem before the situation gets out of hand. In order for managers to win the battle to prevent employee attrition, a proactive approach needs to be taken quite early, rather than following a late reactive approach.

Boepple-Swider (2008: 133) posits that wastewater systems need to be operated like a business where retention plans are in place. Allen *et al.* (2010: 51) support the statement and advocate for the development of effective retention management plans by organisations. According to Boepple-Swider (2008: 133), employee retention could be achieved when workers are,

- Valued,

- Nurtured, and
- Supported.

2.7.1 Valued employees

Employees need to feel that the work they do makes a difference (Izzo & Withers, 2002: 55). Tuzun and Kalemci (2011: 519) add that “just as employees form global perceptions concerning their valuation by the organization, they also develop a general view concerning the degree to which supervisors value their contribution”.

Ongori (2007: 051) proposes information accessibility as a mechanism to make employees feel that they are appreciated for their effort and suggests that this would minimise chances of employees leaving the organisation. The value shown to employees that could help retention efforts, according to the Environmental Labour Market Research, 2010: 16), could take the form of an increase in “perks that come with working in an essential service to the community”.

Abrahams (2004: 19) and Ongori (2007: 051) support the provision of financial incentives to curb turnover by respectively arguing that “the most obvious retention strategy is also the most common – money” and “if jobs provide the adequate financial incentives the more likely employees remain with organisations”. Abrahams (2004: 19) and Boe, Cook and Sunderland (2008: 7) supported by Monte (2012: 1718), spell out the perks as the provision of financial incentives like bonuses and salary adjustments to employees who have served a specific company for a set number of years.

Abrahams (2004: 19) proposes the hosting of formal programmes for employee recognition as another way to show employees they are valued. Abrahams continues that such programmes are a powerful way of building employee loyalty when employees have performed outstandingly; maintained the behaviour that is consistent with corporate goals; have achieved higher levels of tenure; and have depicted exemplary customer service. Deserving employees could be awarded by a letter of recognition from the company

president; gift certificates; leisure trips and customised recognition methods that would have the biggest impact and serve to promote inner satisfaction and ultimately, retention.

2.7.2 Nurturing employees

Izzo and Withers (2002: 55) argue that employees in the United States of America in the mid-seventies perceived work as a means to provide for themselves; today, seventy percent of employees see work as a place of growth; personal fulfilment and learning. In linking up with this, Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 6260) argue that, to retain employees, employers must make it their duty to know what factors motivate their employees in order for the workers to continue the relationship with the employer and remain in their chosen field of work. Therefore employers, upon discovering what makes their employees happy, should always ensure that what makes their employees happy and productive is facilitated.

Izzo and Withers (2002: 55) argue that “a lack of opportunities to learn and grow often leads workers to move on to other employment” and suggest that employers need to ensure that employees get opportunities to acquire skills to nurture and enhance their professional and personal growth. Employers who invested more in their workforce and offered long-term incentives had significantly lower rates of quits” (Batt & Colvin, 2011: 710).

The long-term investments could take the form of mentoring programmes for junior employees where an experienced mentor could guide an employee with potential to build the company’s second layer leadership. This could be done by the organisation with the view of ensuring that there could be a smooth transition in leadership in case a supervisor retires or leaves, and continuity would be ensured with minimal or no disruption to business operations. Avolio *et al.* (2004: 954) add that empowered employees perceive themselves as more capable and that they have the potential to influence processes in their job and the entire organisation.

Fostering friendships at work where managers take an interest in the employees’ personal lives and ensure fun and connectedness amongst

employees is a mechanism that organisations could use to ensure staff retention in the workplace (Izzo & Withers, 2002: 56). The results of a study by Nishii and Mayer (2009: 1421) indicate that turnover in diverse groups is lesser when there is low differentiation than in instances where there is high differentiation in leader-member relationships.

The researcher, in support of the above posits that the relationship between the leader and his or her team members should not be extremely characterised by the existence of a power relationship where the leader has all the power and the member has absolutely no power. This, however, does not suggest that the power lines should be completely blurred.

Mooney *et al.* (2007: 755) assert that, to ensure employees are able to trust each other and work as a collective in a synergised manner, training could be the panacea; however the programme should be designed well. According to Mooney *et al.* (2007: 755), team leaders should make provision for employees to get to know each other to achieve a better understanding of one another, their backgrounds and the skills that inform their perspectives as individuals.

Concerning nurturing employees psychologically, Liu, Zhang, Wang and Lee (2011: 1308) argue that “psychological empowerment is likely to channel the effect of autonomy orientation, as well as the multilevel interactive effect between autonomy support and its team-level idiosyncrasy, to reduce turnover in the team setting”. Psychologically empowering employers that provide opportunities for employees to work independently could help motivate them to a level where they become individuals committed to the team and the organisation.

Such psychological nurturing; team building through mentoring; and friendships would ensure the entrenchment, otherwise called job embeddedness, as discussed by Holtom and Inderrieden (2006: 463), of employees within the organisation.

2.7.2.1 Job embeddedness

Holtom and Inderrieden (2006: 436) suggest that implementing the job embeddedness theory could help curb employee turnover because the theory asserts that “the greater the person’s connections to an organization and community, the more likely it is that he or she will remain with the organization”.

The job embeddedness construct, according to Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1102), “includes individuals’ (1) links to other people, teams, and groups, (2) perceptions of their fit with job, organization, and community, and (3) what they say they would have to sacrifice if they left their jobs”. The more a nurturing environment is created to the extent that it ensures that employees have strong links with individuals, colleagues in their diversity, and work units including the entire work population, the more embedded the employee would be in the organisation. Where employees have healthy relations with others, it becomes difficult for an employee to leave behind all the sound relationships that have been built over the employee’s tenure with the organisation.

The three critical aspects of the job embeddedness theory, *links*, *fit* and *sacrifice*, are discussed in detail below:

- ***Links***

Links are the number of strands that connect an individual employee in a psychological and social network that comprises work friends, groups, and the community, including the physical environment in which the employee works (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001: 1104). According to Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1104) these can be distinguished as formal and informal relationships between a person and institutions or others. The more the number of linking strands the more the embeddedness in job and organisation (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001: 1104). Tuzun and Kalemci (2011: 519) add that “employees tend to seek a balance in their exchange relationships with their organizations by having their attitudes and behaviours based on their employer’s commitment to them as individuals”.

To ensure reduced turnover, employers should ensure that their employees are psychologically linked to the organisation by facilitating better interaction with the minds of employees, which will lead to strengthened and not weakening linkages (Bentein *et al.*, 2005: 468). Bentein *et al.* (2005: 468) argue that “the

‘evolution’ of commitment over time is thus a critical index of the way the relationship between a given employee and his or her organization evolves over time”. It is obvious that commitment develops over time and organisations need to communicate the right messages to the employees in good time for building meaningful exchanges to ensure that employees receive correct communication that entrenches deeper and stronger links.

The employees’ organisational, links according to Avolio *et al.* (2004: 962), could be built, strengthened and achieved by managers adopting the transformational leadership style. Avolio *et al.* (2004: 953) define the said leadership style as the one that ensures employers “get followers involved in envisioning an attractive future and inspire them to be committed to achieving that future”. Avolio *et al.* (2004: 953) add that transformational leaders build team spirit through their passion, integrity, high moral standards, giving meaning and by becoming optimistic, while at the same time providing their followers with challenges in their work and developing their followers’ level of self-efficiency, meaning, confidence and self-determination.

- ***Fit***

Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1104) perceive fit “as an employee’s perceived compatibility or comfort with an organization and with his or her environment”. The theory on fit posits that the personal values, career goals, and future plans must be compatible with the larger corporate culture and the demands, meaning job knowledge, skills and capabilities, of the employee’s job (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001: 1104). The better the fit, argue Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1104), the higher the probability that the employee would feel professionally and personally embedded to an organisation.

- ***Sacrifice***

Sacrifice was addressed while discussing continuance commitment, but to re-emphasize the point, Mitchell *et al.* (2001: 1104) posit that sacrifice encapsulates the apparent cost of material or psychological benefits that could be surrendered by an employee leaving a job. The departure from an organization entails personal losses like sacrificing colleagues, fascinating

projects or perks (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001: 1104). Therefore, one can conclude that if one could count the ample benefits he or she could forfeit when leaving employment, that individual could reconsider and remain embedded to the organization. The nature of organizational benefits is that they normally accrue the more an employee stays with the same organization (Mitchell *et al.*, 2001: 1104).

2.7.3 Employee support

Calling for employee support to curb turnover, Boyar *et al.* (2011: 18) argue that the level of managerial support should be increased in order to support employees through providing advancement opportunities and challenging work, and providing an environment that is less stressful to the employee.

The Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 12) had earlier alluded to the need for employees in the wastewater field to be provided with opportunities to strike a balance between work and personal life. Adding to the need of employee balanced lives discussed in the reasons section, Izzo and Withers (2002: 54) argue that the manner in which employers respond to the workforce's constantly non-static dynamics goes a distance in determining the employer's success in attracting and retaining employees.

Izzo and Withers (2002: 54) provide an example of an employee who wants to watch his or her child play a match in the afternoon where the employer can respond by saying that company policy does not allow for employees to be released on such occasions. The employer could even go to the extent of questioning the employee's work ethic, querying how an employee could prioritise a soccer match over the job that provides him or her with sustenance of his or her livelihood.

The researcher notes that, in the light of the workforce's ever changing dynamics cited above, not looking at a way to provide the employee with an option that would suit his or her preferences could lead to employee turnover. A better option would be to look for a win-win situation whereby the employee's needs are met while not compromising the organisation's operation and productivity levels.

To further curb turnover, managers need to scrutinise their employees' current performance and the direction of performance change and, on that basis, gauge turnover risk so that turnover, in that way, could be averted by putting in place mitigation measures like providing wellness programmes when needed (Becker & Cropanzano, 2011: 233-234).

Monte (2012:1718) in contrast argues that workers' satisfaction is correlated with properly developed activity. Batt and Colvin's (2011: 695) findings are consistent with Monte's (2012: 1718) in that high-involvement work organisations are associated with significantly lower rates of departure, but short-term performance-enhancing expectations are related to significantly higher rates of departure.

Boyar *et al.* (2011: 18) emphasise the engagement of employees in organisations by arguing that "to encourage loyalty and for employees to share their intellectual capital, organizations must find ways to engage them". To corroborate the notion around employee engagement, the Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 5) postulates that employees need to be kept engaged by combining intelligent, imaginative and functional activities to keep them engaged and in that way curb turnover. Employers can therefore support employees by designing their work in such a way that employees are provided with job profiles that are clear and that they are constantly occupied by challenging work.

2.7.4 Human resources management and development measures

To curb turnover, development of human resource policies that will aid and fortify the workforce within the sector is required (Environmental Labour Market Research, 2010: 7).

Morrel *et al.* (2004: 164) suggest that "if a firm can identify that much of their voluntary turnover is unavoidable, they may profit better from initiatives that seek to manage turnover *post hoc*, such as by streamlining recruitment processes, rather than spend on theorised preventative measures".

Another human resources related mechanism of curbing turnover is presented by Barrick and Zimmerman (2005: 160), who argue that, "if an individual has a

habit of seeking out other jobs, as represented by short tenure in the previous job, he or she is likely to do so again"., Prospective employees whose bio data reveals an inclination to quickly leave their jobs therefore are likely to repeat that type of behaviour in the not so distant future. It then becomes important for organisations to familiarise themselves with the applicants' employment history before hiring them in order to manage turnover proactively during the screening and selection phases of recruitment.

According to Barrick and Zimmerman (2005: 161), bio data refers to the tenure the employee has had with the previous employer; the number of family and friends who work for the same company, which is a slight indication of the likelihood of an employee to stay longer; and the attitudes and behavioural intentions of the prospective employee about the job he or she is evaluated for.

Griffeth *et al.*'s (2000:485) finding that individuals with high turnover susceptibility have to be identified prior to organisational entry is consistent with the above argumentation.

Weller, Holtom, Matiaske and Mellewigt (2009: 1146) argue that the turnover hazard in employees recruited through personal recruitment sources is lower than in employees recruited through formal sources. Weller and colleagues therefore suggest that, in order to curb turnover, recruitment should be done through personal recruitment sources.

Snow and Mutschler (2012: 3) suggest identifying and investing in employees by implementing succession planning through mentoring as a mechanism of retaining talent.

Plant managers that show potential to lead at a level above their current position could be identified and mentored to prepare them for the future. When employees know they are earmarked for senior roles, it is likely they would stay with the company. The mentoring mechanism propagated by Snow and Mutschler (2012: 23) is the development of employees in the form of attending meetings of managers once a month for a year to learn about "finance and budgeting, communications/public relations, advanced process control, working with consultants, and permitting and state regulations". Provision of financial

support for workers identified through the succession planning process to develop skills levels is also suggested by Snow and Mutschler (2012: 4) as a means to curb turnover.

The Research undertaken by the Environmental Labour Market (2010: 16) also posits the provision of training above the minimum for all employees to engage the workers as an incentive to encourage employees to remain with the organization.

A human resources-driven organisational culture advocated by Boepple-Swider (2008: 135) involves the establishment of internal alliances and partnerships to curb turnover. Young employees especially nowadays not only need to be involved in work but also to be treated as partners who get satisfaction from having a sense of ownership of company processes and products. Employees need to know the details of what is happening in the company they work for; they need involvement in strategic planning sessions in order to be listened to; to cross pollinate ideas within and across departments; to unblock barriers and to provide input in order to suggest workable solutions.

Batt and Colvin's (2011: 711) view is consistent with the partnership with employees and argue that "employees quit less because their involvement in operational decisions and problem solving creates more engaging and satisfying jobs; novices and poor performers benefit from the structure of learning and motivation created through team-based forms of work".

According to the Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 17), job rotation is another way to curb turnover through reducing the impact of some of the routine duties associated with wastewater treatment. In connection with this, Snow and Mutschler (2012: 20) advise that more people need to be exposed to the range of work in the wastewater sector to attract interest and in that way build the brand of the sector.

Abrahams (2004: 19) suggests that an organisation can differentiate itself from the rest through human resources practices to ensure that it becomes the employer of choice to its employees and those that it are likely to be recruited for its future expansion. The brand that an organisation creates becomes a pull

to its employees and in that way loyalty among employees is built. Mehdi *et al.* (2012: 47) validate the argumentation of brand creation by arguing that “it should be noted that the ability to build a firm’s brand and culture can mitigate attrition and turnover problems”. In addition, Mehdi *et al.* (2012: 47) say, “therefore, actions and activities that enhance corporate brand and culture not only play a role in building a firm’s reputation for external constituents, but also play a direct role in reducing employee turnover”.

Regarding staff retention, Izzo and Withers (2002: 54) conclude that “studies on retention show that flexible work-schedules represent a major job benefit for many employees”. The researcher concludes that, employers should employ flexible work-schedules as a mechanism to retain employees if employees perceive it as a benefit. Flexible work schedules could take the form of an employee starting work earlier than the normal working hours and leave early, as long as he or she has worked the required hours. This would allow employees to attend to their personal needs that need their attention during work days.

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter revealed that the body of knowledge around employee turnover continues to gain momentum despite of it having been researched for many years. In this chapter the understanding of turnover was explained from a generic, pragmatic and managerial perspective.

The discussion revealed three types of voluntary turnover and examined the psychologically related unfolding model, the work of Lee, Mitchell, Wise and Fireman (1996: 6), which explains, through a Fortran-style diagram, how an individual arrives at a decision to leave a job. The second and third models are the work motivation and economic models.

A number of reasons for employee turnover were linked to demographic factors, professional perceptions and organisational conditions that reveal why employees leave their jobs. The chapter reveals sector-specific and unique reasons for employee turnover within the wastewater sector as the under-

appreciation of the industry; unappealing work conditions; irregular working hours; and many dangerous hazards.

The main effects of employee turnover discovered in the study are the disruptions; inhibited internal operating culture; quantifiable and unquantifiable costs and / or losses; shallow candidate pools; and mismanagement of wastewater works which result in hampering the rendition of services and leading to compromised public health followed by customer dissatisfaction.

Lastly, the chapter proposes a number of different interventions that need to be put in place consistent with the view presented by Allen *et al.* (2010: 51), who argued that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to curbing turnover, meaning there are different interventions that could be used to reduce the prevalence of turnover.

To curb turnover in the wastewater sector, employees need to be valued, nurtured and supported. Additional human resources-related measures, like implementing a succession plan, for example also have to be put in place to curb the turnover scourge.

CHAPTER 3: LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The third chapter first outlines the expectations of the United Nations on member states regarding citizens' right to water and proposes practical retention strategies to curb employee turnover. One of the International Labour Organization's Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work is briefly discussed. The expectations of the South African Constitution regarding the actions that need to be taken to ensure that citizens and the environment remain in good health and that citizens have access to safe drinking water are discussed in detail. A number of South African statutes, national and local government strategies which substantiate some of the reasons triggering employee turnover while also suggesting a number of broad and specific retention strategies to curb employee turnover are discussed. The latter part of the chapter covers the East Rand Water Care's internal employee retention strategies.

3.2 INTERNATIONAL POLICY AND PERSPECTIVE

The United Nations Human Rights Charter: Right to Water , (United Nations, 2010: 38) places an obligation on member states to put in place administrative and policy measures in order to ensure that world citizens have access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation. The researcher postulates that strategies that are employed have to ensure that the administrative and policy measures implemented are skewed towards ensuring that turnover is curbed to ensure that the ideals of the United Nations on human rights to water are achieved.

An important measure which all the world countries agreed on, were the eight millennium development goals, Millennium Development Goals, Country Report (2013: 3) to enhance human development in all nations. South Africa became a willing signatory to the Millennium Development Goals, (Millennium Development Goals, Country Report, 2013: 3). To achieve goal seven, which aims to ensure environmental sustainability and more specifically to improve stability of water supply and sanitation, South Africa has adopted plans and policies (Millennium Development Goals, Country Report, 2013: 94). Some of the policies adopted are the National Strategy for Sustainable Development, the New Growth Path; Green Economy Accord and Integrated Resource Plan 2010-2025 (Millennium Development Goals, Country Report, 2013: 93).

To address the issues of work-life balance which act as a turnover deterrent, a study commissioned by the United Nations posits that the workforce needs to be equipped to better handle their work-life needs for better organisational staff retention and ultimately for success (Levey, 2010: 4). In so arguing Levey, (2010: 5) proposes the following flexible work arrangements to ensure employee work-life fit:

- Staggered work hours – departments to express essential hours around which employees could take flexible working hours.
- Flexibility windows – to assist employees to be away for educational purposes for three hours up to two days in a week.
- Compressed workweek – an employee working longer hours for nine consecutive days and being away from work in the tenth day.
- Telecommuting – an employee working from home for up to two days a week.

‘A fair globalization: Opportunities for All’ (2004: 91), a publication penned by the International Labour Organization’s sponsored World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization supports Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 629) regarding fairness and the elimination of discrimination in the workplace by calling for the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment.

Corroborating Muteswa and Ortlepp (2011: 13) on the notion of competition as a reason for turnover, 'A fair globalization: Opportunities for All' (2004: 96) postulates that transnational enterprises have intensified the practice of shopping overseas for exceptional talent.

3.3 THE CONSTITUTION OF THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA ACT No. 108 OF 1996

Earlier, a point about the susceptibility of humans getting infections and organisms dying as a result of employee turnover was raised. Adding to that discourse and arguing in line with the United Nations' viewpoint, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) as amended, which is the supreme law of the country, aims "to improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of every person". In an environment where adopted policies are such that the wastewater treatment works of the country are managed in an effective manner, and the health of the citizens is a priority, there is potential for citizens to lead productive lives free from sickness, which is a necessity for productivity, economic development and the quality of life of citizens. The researcher believes that the potential of any individual is restricted where there is sickness.

The importance of providing water services in a sustainable and equitable manner (Scott, 2005: 173), is consistent with the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) which asserts that the country is founded on values of "human dignity and the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms".

The Bill of Rights, a chapter in the Constitution, bestows a number of rights on the citizenry, the achievement of which would be tampered with if the rights would be jettisoned due to turnover. Chief amongst those are the rights to:

3.3.1 Environment

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) bestows the right to

- (a) an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and
 - (b) Have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations,
- through reasonable legislative and other measures.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) the measures should put a stop to pollution, promote conservation and protect ecological sustainable development and the use of natural resources and at the same time promote justifiable economic and social advancement.

The tone of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) is consistent with the Water Services Amendment Act 2 of 2012 (Republic of South Africa, 2012b) that recognises “the basic human needs of present and future generations, the need to protect water resources ..., the need to promote social and economic development through the use of water”.

3.3.2 Health care, food, water and social security

The Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996) further provides the right to citizens to have adequate access to health care, food, *water*, and other rights. Failure to manage the prevalence and the crippling effects of voluntary turnover amongst wastewater works managers could result in organisations entrusted with the responsibility of serving communities falling short in ensuring that the provisions of the Bill of Rights see the light of day.

3.4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT: MUNICIPAL SYSTEMS ACT No. 32 OF 2000

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) posits that “a municipality must in the exercise of its executive and legislative authority respect the rights of citizens and those of other persons protected by the Bill of Rights”.

The Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) supports the provision of citizen rights by placing the responsibility on municipalities to endeavour to ensure that the services provided at the local level of government are facilitated in a financially and environmentally sustainable manner.

Ongori (2007: 050) cited role clarity and ambiguity as triggers of voluntary employee turnover. To curb turnover, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) posits that municipalities “must provide a job description for each post on the staff establishment”. The researcher supports the provision of a job description in that it would help curb employee turnover as it would help clarify the role an employee should be playing, with the result that an employee would not be confused and not know what is expected of him or her.

To curtail the negative effects of turnover, the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) posits that there is a need to develop pleasant relations between municipalities and local citizens through the acknowledgement of mutual rights and duties. The view of the researcher is that, municipalities in the provisioning of services should ensure that they perform their duties with the communities they serve in mind. On the other hand, the communities should ensure they play their role in ensuring that they are not a hindrance to municipalities functioning as they should, and cause managerial stress, which was highlighted as a turnover trigger.

Adverse working conditions, poor supervision, inadequate staff monitoring and lack of promotional opportunities were cited as reasons for employee turnover. The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) proposes a strategy to reverse the trend, arguing that municipalities must create and adopt relevant systems and processes in line with the Employment Equity Act to ensure that human resources practices and personnel administration are effective, efficient and transparent. The administration, according to the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (Republic of South Africa, 2000) should include:

- (a) *service conditions of staff,*

- (b) *the supervision and management of staff,*
- (c) *the monitoring, measuring and evaluating of performance of staff;*
- (d) *the promotion and demotion of staff.*

The Local Government: Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) further corroborates the provision of a healthy environment arguing that “the council of a municipality ... has the duty to promote a safe and healthy environment in the municipality”.

3.5 BASIC CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT AMENDMENT ACT No. 11 OF 2002

The argumentation regarding the provision of benefits that are friendly to families postulated earlier in the Environmental Labour Market Research (2010: 12) identified the need for employees in the wastewater sector to be provided with opportunities to strike a balance between work and personal life. Those conditions are regulated by the Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act No. 11 of 2002 (Republic of South Africa, 2002a) which establishes the provision, for example, by the employer to employees of:

3.5.1 Family responsibility leave - given to employees who have worked for the same employer for more than four months and for at least four days in a year, time off when the employee’s child is born and when sick. Family responsibility leave is also applicable when the employee’s spouse or life partner, or parent, passes on.

3.5.2 Maternity leave – given to female employees, which is four consecutive months to look after the child while entitled to receiving full pay.

3.6 THE LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT No. 12 OF 2002

Chen and Bliese, in Avolio *et al.* (2004: 955), cited the importance of effective communication through consultation as a means to curb turnover and it is in that context that the Labour Relations Amendment Act (Republic of South Africa,

2002) highlights the need to ensure employee consultation and joint decision making in the workplace. The Labour Relations Amendment Act No. 12 (Republic of South Africa, 2002b) argues that with regard to issues that affect employees, like job grading, disciplinary codes and procedures and workplace restructuring, to mention a few, consultation and joint decision making need to be done by the employer and employees.

3.7 HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (HRD-SA) 2010-2030

Making provision for the proper management of water resources was mentioned in this research. With regard to the handing of management reins to other managers not familiar with a specific wastewater treatment works, the Human Resource Development Strategy (2009: 20) suggests increasing the number of adequately skilled personnel to meet the demands of the country's current and emerging economic development priorities. If the suggestion could be implemented, Plant managers would have a lot of support from their trained staff and the stress cited by Boyas *et al.* (2012: 50) as another reason behind turnover would be reduced.

The current Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (2009: 9) further acknowledges "that human resources are an essential means of achieving economic, social and development goals". This statement emphasises the fact that productivity is hampered by the absence of human resources who for one reason or another increase turnover by opting to leave.

This research has presented substantial coverage of job dissatisfaction, team dynamics, lack of commitment, jobs that do not engaging employees, and skills or lack thereof as turnover triggers. The Human Resource Development Strategy for South Africa (2009: 9) corroborates the existence of the challenges above by postulating that "the productivity of each individual is determined by, among others, his or her technical skills, the extent to which his or her basic needs are met, values and orientation, social inclusion, and a commitment to advancing public good". It is, therefore, clear that employee skills development, expectations, raised earlier by Wright and Bonnet (1993: 151), values and work

group cohesion as cited by Griffeth *et al.* (2000: 483) need to be prioritised to facilitate employee engagement in work activities, which is a turnover panacea.

3.8 NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2030 (2011)

The National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011b: 157), noting and proposing an alternative strategy to curbing employee turnover, argues that the technical capacity to build and manage wastewater treatment systems are lacking in many municipalities. This results in polluted water resources that are unsustainable for use, which might require a regional approach to wastewater management. This approach lends credence to the argumentation by Snow and Mutschler (2012: 23) who proposed developmental meetings of managers once a month for them to learn from each other.

3.9 ENERGY AND WATER SETA SECTOR SKILLS PLAN (2011)

The Energy and Water Seta Sector Skills Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011a: 80) indicates that “there is a global demand for engineers”. As a result of the demand, people may migrate for economic reasons from employers that provide fewer benefits to workplaces that offer better profits. In addition, the Water Services Sector has to compete nationally with other sectors for trained personnel”.

The argumentation on competition lends credence to the assertion by Muteswa and Ortlepp (2011: 13) around competition for personnel, which was supported by the International Labour Organization’s ‘A fair globalization: Opportunities for All’ (2004: 96).

In order to avoid turnover, the Energy and Water Services Sector Skills Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011a: 80) argues that the sector needs to invest in retention strategies to ensure engineers are encouraged to remain within the pool. The retention could be achieved; the researcher posits that a special

incentive could be made available for all those who are in the different engineering disciplines.

3.10 WATER SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT No. 2 OF 2012

South Africa promulgated the Water Services Amendment Act No. 2 of 2012 (Republic of South Africa, 2012b) emphasising sustainability and equity in the provision of water services as the fundamental principles. Central guiding principles identified in the Water Services Amendment Act are the “protection, use, development, conservation, *management and control of water resources*”. In circumstances where there is high voluntary turnover of employees, both the fundamental and guiding principles would not be achieved, more so, the management and control of water resources, which is the main discussion point of this paper.

3.11 EMPLOYMENT EQUITY AMENDMENT ACT No. 47 OF 2013

To address issues of fairness or lack thereof raised by Mor Barak *et al.* (2001: 629) that cause employee turnover, the Employment Equity Amendment Act 47 of 2013 (Republic of South Africa, 2013a) requires employers to take reasonable steps to promote equal opportunities and eliminate unfair discrimination in the workplace.

3.12 NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT OF 2013

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and the South African Local Government Association developed a strategy to guide provincial and municipal authorities in their quest to address local government challenges in the country, as espoused in the National Human Resources Management and Development Strategy for Local Government (Republic of

South Africa, 2013b: 4). This is the realisation of the notion discussed earlier by Scott (2005:173) concerning Developmental Local Government. The strategy corroborates the finding by Abrahams (2004: 19) regarding the negative impact on service provision that results from turnover, by postulating that local government has to be responsive, effective and efficient in serving the basic needs of communities (Republic of South Africa, 2013: 26-27). According to the National Human Resources Management and Development Strategy for Local Government (Republic of South Africa, 2013b: 37), the turnover trend could be halted through the socialisation of people within the municipality and the redeployment of human resources in areas where they would be effective.

The researcher supports the socialisation of new employees into the municipal culture as it would enhance team compatibility, and redeployment as it would ensure that turnover is stemmed by ensuring that those identified as having higher abilities but perform menial tasks and become bored are moved to where they would be engaged in tasks that challenge them, as Maltarich *et al.* (2010: 1058) suggested.

3.2 ERWAT'S POLICIES THAT SUPPORT RETENTION OF EMPLOYEES

The policies listed below have been adopted by the East Rand Water Care in an effort to assist retain employees within the organisation by offering various benefits to the workforce:

- a) **Home Ownership Benefit Policy of 1995** – the policy is aimed at facilitating the ownership of homes for employees who have been in the employ of the organisation for a minimum of twelve months.
- b) **Rural Building Assistance Policy of 1995** – the scheme is an alternative to the Home Ownership Benefit Policy for employees who wish to take up loans to build new or add on to existing personal houses for the benefit of their rural-based families.

- c) **Safety Policy of 1996** – the organization undertakes to train all employees to be in a position to conduct their duties in a safe manner, provide protective clothing and ensure that all safety equipment conform to safety regulations.
- d) **Performance Reward Bonus Policy of 1998** – the scheme is aimed at compensating employees relative to their performance and contribution to organisational success.
- e) **Flexitime Policy of 1998** – the policy is intended to allow employees to choose working hours that suit them to accommodate personal and family engagements while making sure they work for forty hours in a week.
- f) **Medical Aid Subsidy Policy of 2008** – the policy was adopted to facilitate employee health and assist employees to be able to cope with the financial liability that goes with financing ill-health and medical conditions. The organisation contributes two thirds of the total amount payable as a premium and the employee pays a third to a medical aid scheme approved by the employer.
- g) **Study Scheme Policy of 2008** – the policy seeks to enable employees to arm themselves by improving their academic qualifications through part-time studies.

3.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The United Nations, the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the Water Services Amendment Act No. 2 of 2000 (Republic of South Africa, 2000) agree on the importance of the provision of safe drinking water and the improvement of the quality of citizen life through the development and adoption of policies that ensure adequate management and control of water resources.

This chapter highlighted the reasons for turnover, for example, the Energy and Water Seta Sector Skills Plan arguing the existence of global competition and the ways to curb turnover, like the elimination of discrimination as proposed by International Labour Organization policy and the Employment Equity Amendment Act No. 47 of 2013 (Republic of South Africa, 2013a). A number of strategies from the United Nations and the International Labour Organisation, government statutes, local government and the organisation's strategies to curb employee turnover have been outlined:

- Flexible working arrangements for employees,
- The provision of job descriptions for positions available in municipal staff establishments,
- Ensuring the effectiveness of human resources practices and personnel administration, for example, proper staff appraisals; supervision; communication and service conditions,
- The adoption of a regional approach to the management of wastewater works,
- Increasing the number of skilled personnel to alleviate stress on managers,
- Prioritising employee skills development, meeting employee expectations and enhancing work group cohesion,
- Providing benefits that will allow employees to balance their social and work lives,
- Ensuring fairness by eliminating unfair discrimination in the workplace, and
- Numerous employee benefit schemes aimed at gaining employee commitment.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter outlines the methodology for data collection and analysis. Various sampling techniques were used to determine which groups would participate in the interview process are discussed in detail. The first research objective on the reasons for the high rate of turnover in the East Rand Water Care of young plant managers is then dealt with, highlighting the data collection methods and analytical techniques used to gather and analyse data. Results of the negative impact of the high rate of turnover of the organisation are also highlighted. The findings on the organisation's financial, productivity, achievement and knowledge management impact losses are specifically provided. The chapter also assesses the organisational retention strategies regarding whether existing strategies have aided in stemming the exit of young Plant managers within the East Rand Water Care. An outline of ten common themes from the research findings and the discussion in the literature review is also outlined in detail. The chapter ends with the chapter summary containing a brief summation of what was covered.

4.2 METHODOLOGY

The methodology section discusses the process followed to collect and analyse secondary data. This section also presents data collection methods used in the study, namely the structured interviews and how the meetings were conducted.

4.2.1 Secondary Data Collection

Mouton (2011: 105) explains the methodology for secondary data collection, as a method used to analyse previously gathered and captured data. Data meant to be gathered and analysed in this research were collected from existing source documents, namely exit interview, employment equity, financial, human resources, and green drop reports and relevant company policy documents.

4.2.2 Structured Interviews

Structured interviews were chosen to gather primary data and facilitate what Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2012: 165) identify as social interaction between two actors to ensure that follow-up questions are responded to there and then. The researcher took notes of the responses of the interviewees during the interview process. The interviews were held with the sampled population and a list of questions contained in a questionnaire that had been prepared guided the interview. During the interviews, the questions were read out to the interviewees who were also provided with a copy. They had to respond orally.

Structured interviews with the employer representatives were found to be economical as the researcher and participants work in the same building. It is important to note that fifteen employees who represented the employer included the Human Resources Executive Manager; three District Managers; seven Regional Managers; the Recruitment Manager and three Human Resources Management Consultants. Fifteen former employees graded as Class V Process Controllers, also known as Plant managers, were also interviewed to take the number of interviewees to thirty.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis methods used to examine figures and text are dealt with in this section. Sampling techniques used to determine the participants in the study are also discussed.

4.3.1 Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis

In the analysis of the secondary data from source documents, content analysis of the qualitative data was facilitated through counting the frequencies of words and phrases, as postulated by Welman *et al.* (2012: 221), which suggested turnover reasons like “health hazards”. To further analyse and make sense of the collected data, descriptive coding was used. The coding method was used to achieve what Welman *et al.* (2012: 213) explain as the reduction of vast amounts of data into controllable and understandable text. Quantitative data for providing numbers to find the most common and unique reasons that triggered employee attrition was gathered for analysis by counting the number of times any one reason appeared in the relevant source documents.

4.3.2 Sampling Techniques

The probability sampling technique was utilized to identify the population sample in order to facilitate the interviews. This sampling method is used to ensure that any relevant element of the population will be included to participate in the research and in doing so ensure the reliability of research results (Welman *et al.*, 2012: 59).

Simple random sampling was utilised in the selection of previous employees for interviews; to ensure that, as Welman *et al.* (2012: 59) argue, every member of the population of previous managers in the two years under review had the same chance of being included in the sample.

Regarding the identification of interviewees representing the employer, a stratified random sampling technique was used because different players are responsible for various roles in different layers of the organisational hierarchy. The choice of the technique was informed by Welman *et al.* (2012: 61) who recommend this sampling type when the sample population comprise numerous visibly recognisable, non-duplicating strata based on a single or more variables. In the case of this study, examples of variables were occupational levels and different work departments.

4.4 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This part of the study presents the findings based on personal and organizational reasons for turnover. The section also addresses the effects resulting from employee turnover and the findings on the effect of the organisation's employee turnover strategies.

4.4.1 Findings on most common and unique reasons for turnover

The results showed a combination of reasons for the departure of each employee. The listing of a number of reasons corroborates argumentation by Ongori (2007: 049) who, pointing to a number of reasons why employees terminate their tenure with employers, postulated that "there is no standard reason why people leave organisations".

In order to arrive at the findings for the most common and unique reasons for Plant manager turnover at ERWAT as discussed below, two exit interview reports and two interviews with former employees indicated two instances where health hazards were cited as turnover triggers. Another interview held with the Human Resources Management Consultant, an Occupational Nurse by profession, shed some light on the diseases that the young managers are exposed to, which are *Hepatitis A* and *B* whose *modus operandi* is to attack the liver. The former is waterborne and the latter a blood-borne disease. Five and two interviews with the Regional and District managers corroborated the exits through health hazards respectively.

1. A unique reason for leaving in the Wastewater Works of the East Rand Water Care was ***health risks associated with working in the wastewater environment***. Employees in a wastewater treatment plant are exposed to faecal material, poisonous gases like methane and faulty equipment that could lead to disease, poisonous gas inhalation, serious injuries, electrocution and death. In an effort to avert being exposed to such risks and save their health and lives, employees decided to leave and look for employment that had lower health hazards.

The finding corroborates the argumentation by Snow and Mutschler (2012: 5) that cited the existence of perilous working conditions, faulty equipment and gases in wastewater treatment plants.

2. ***Low identification with the work environment*** that deals with faecal material for young Plant managers was also a finding that triggered turnover.

The above result was discovered through examining exit interview reports to identify the frequencies of the term low identification and related words on the documents and the number of former employees who cited this reason as having triggered their exits based on the exit interview data.

The qualitative and quantitative secondary data analysis yielded seven phrases and numerical frequencies of former employees mentioning low identification as the reason for leaving. Eight of the interviews with former employees led to the finding that suggests that low identification with the wastewater environment leads to Plant manager turnover.

The interviews with the Human Resources Executive Manager, three Regional and all the District managers confirmed the departures caused by low identification.

Mehdi *et al.* (2012:47) have been quoted as arguing that employees want to do jobs that enhance their self-esteem, which would make them proud and want them to be associated with the job. Regarding the wastewater industry, some of the young employees left because they never wanted to be defined by the operations associated with the collection and treatment of sewage. This finding corroborates Snow and Mutschler's (2012: 5) reason for employee turnover, that is, the unappealing conditions and environment under which employees in wastewater works operate.

3. ***Personal economic reasons*** were another explanation for voluntary turnover within the East Rand Water Care. The study revealed that employees they started looking for well-paying jobs with better incentives when they felt were inadequately remunerated. When good financial offers came their way, former Plant managers decided to leave. This lends credence to the finding by

Allen *et al.* (2010: 52) who posited that employees leave for better paying jobs in other places.

Data which informed the result were collected through analysis of secondary data in the form of exit interview reports that yielded the same number of responses as the interviews with the former employees, which comprised fifteen responses for both. This confirmed that the reason for most departures in the organisation is attractive financial offers from the other organisations.

In addition, the interviews with the Human Resources Executive: Recruitment, the seven Regional and the three District Managers agreed that lucrative offers from the organisation's competitors were the main cause of Plant manager turnover.

The finding is also consistent with the findings by Allen *et al.* (2010: 52) and Mano-Negrin and Tzafrir (2004: 455) who argued that remuneration is key in managing the prevalence of turnover.

4. The study also found that other young plant managers leave because they were ***poached*** by various municipalities and private businesses in the wastewater business.

Several findings regarding luring of employees by multinational, private businesses and larger municipalities have been cited in this research as reasons of employee turnover. This is supported by Smith in Allen *et al.* (2010: 48) who argued that aggressive recruitment of important employees still occurs.

5. Some former employees left the employ of the East Rand Water Care because of the reason cited by Wright and Bonnet (1993: 151) of ***expectations relating to higher incentives*** that matched the employees' productivity which were not being met. In this case, the incorrect implementation of the internal performance management system, which evenly rewards both good and poor performers, was cited as an example.

The organisation adopted an internal performance management system that was aimed at developing employees and rewarding good performers. The incorrect implementation of a performance appraisal (PA) or management

system cited in interviews by the former Plant managers and conceded to in an interview by the Human Resources Executive has led to turnover. Grobler, Warnich, Carrell, Elbert and Hatfield (2011: 297) argue that Performance assessments are a key element in the use and development of an organisation's most vital resource – its employees. Appraisals are used for a wide range of administrative purposes, such as making decisions about pay, promotion and retention. Effective appraisals can significantly contribute to the satisfaction and motivation of employees - if they are used correctly.

Lack of motivation and job satisfaction has, in this research, been referred to as turnover triggers.

The Human Resources Consultant responsible for performance appraisals conceded that the ERWAT system incentivises both good and bad performance and therefore has areas that have caused employees to leave. An example is given below:

The system was through the interviews with the Human Resources Consultant responsible for performance appraisals; five Regional and three District Managers found to be suffering from a “central tendency”. According to Grobler *et al.* (2011: 313) the central tendency happens when supervisors rate everyone as average where they find it hard to rate others higher or lower than some employees. Grobler *et al.* (2011: 313) further intimate that the central tendency is applied even though employee performances have differed.

The plausible aspect of the “central tendency” is that it ensures that a more team-based approach is achieved by which everyone gets a slice of the cake. On the other hand, it fails to adequately incentivise individual excellent performers. According to Grobler *et al.* (2011: 421), the central tendency has a potential to intensify rivalry among employees, which can be counterproductive and cause employees to leave.

The Human Resources Executive indicated that implementing a performance system that only on paper raises the hopes of high performers to work even

harder and also rewards poor performers discouraged top performers and was found to be a cause of employee turnover.

6. **The lack of proper communication** with plant managers was another reason cited as a reason for turnover in the East Rand Water Care.

Only four former employees reported fewer platforms where they could air their views and where the employer also shared the organisational vision. This corroborates Chen and Bliese's finding (in Avolio *et al.*, 2004: 955) who cited the importance of effective communication as a way to curb turnover. Six interviews with the Regional Managers confirmed the need to open more communication platforms with Plant managers.

7. **Family reasons** were also found to have triggered employees to terminate their employment with the East Rand Water Care. Two employees cited wanting to relocate to be with their families as their reason for terminating employment. The finding is consistent with Hom *et al.* (2012: 833) who argued that spouses put their partners under pressure to join them in a new environment.

The findings on departure triggered by poaching, expectations relating to higher incentives and family are all based on the analysis of secondary data, that is human resources; exit interview reports and oral accounts by the Human Resources Executive; five Regional; three District and a Human Resources Consultant.

The results, based on quantitative and qualitative data that were gathered and analysed and on the interviews that were conducted, are summarised in Figure 4.1 to reflect the reasons and the number of employees who cited the same reason for their departures.

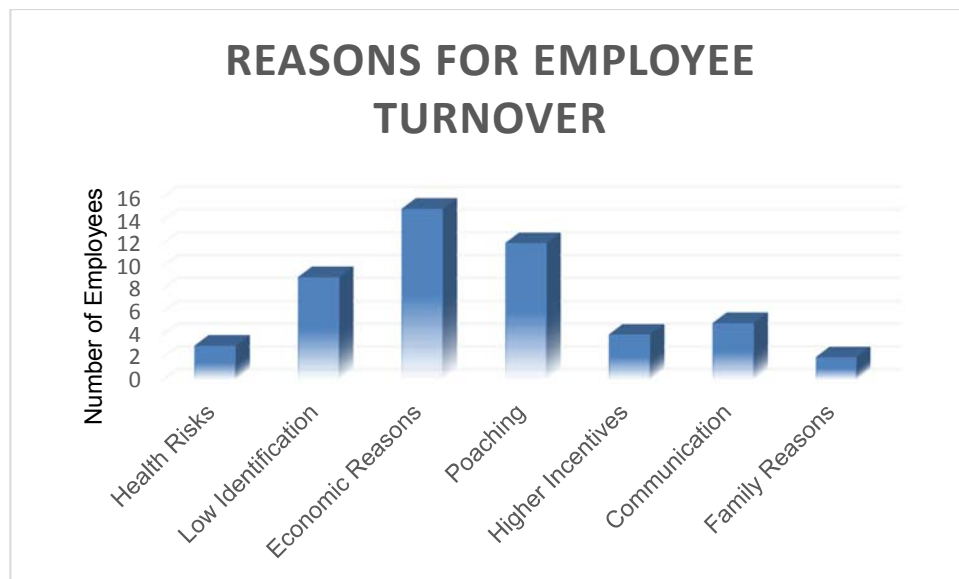


Figure 4.1: Summary of ERWAT employee turnover results for 2011 &12

4.4.2 Findings on effects resulting from employee turnover

1. In the 2011 and 2012 financial years, the organisation spent R127 607.00 and R154 000.00 respectively on ***professional services and recruitment of replacements*** for Plant managers who resigned.

These findings on the tangible costs are based on two human resources and two annual reports, the interviews with the Recruitment Manager and the Human Resources Executive, which confirmed the costs.

The financial losses cited above corroborate the argumentation by Izzo and Withers (2004: 54) who found the existence of quantifiable costs to be associated with employee separations.

If the organisation had been able to avert the turnover of the Plant managers over the two years, R 281 607.00 could have been saved. The funds could have been channelled to other worthy causes initiated by the organisation to help reduce employee turnover.

2. The turnover of young managerial personnel also resulted in ***high absenteeism rates*** of employees.

Analysis of quantitative secondary data from attendance records available on the human resources leave system to which Regional and District Managers have access confirmed the decline in attendance figures in the absence of a Plant manager.

In a workplace where there is no leadership, some employees deliberately stay away from work, knowing there would not be any consequences for their behaviour. This, in turn, impacts negatively on productivity levels because not much can be done and achieved with fewer employees in a labour intensive work environment.

3. The turnover rate contributes to the ***non-attainment of organisational efficiency in processing wastewater in a manner that is healthy for the people of the municipality and friendly to the environment***. As a result, a number of articles in local newspapers reported on the unpleasant smell and sewer spillages running in the communities from the wastewater treatment plants, the result of poor monitoring and late interventions resulting from the absence of leadership in the treatment plants. The spillages could lead to slippery situations, which could harm the residents and increase the prevalence of disease in communities.

Oral accounts by the seven Regional and three District Managers confirmed that monthly reports showed an efficiency decline where there were no managers.

4. The organization's ***poor achievement in one and no Green Drop status*** in the other of two years, respectively, based on the qualitative and quantitative data analysis of Green Drop and annual reports from nineteen plants was partly attributed to the absence of leadership resulting from employee turnover. The interviews with all Regional and District managers corroborated the poor Green Drop scores achieved.

Figure 4.2 shows how well the organisation performed in the 2011 financial year in the Green Drop annual assessments. In Figure 4.2, seventeen wastewater treatment plants are reflected instead of the nineteen run by the organisation. The

reason for the omission in the table is that the other two plants are smaller and were therefore incorporated in two bigger plants.

Gauteng: Comparative Analysis: Green Drop Scores











WSA	Number of Works	WSA Green Drop Score	Average Green Drop Score	Green Drops Awarded	% Systems that achieved >50%	Position on Performance log
City of Johannesburg Metropolitan	7	90.2%	89.5%	 4	100.0%	1
Midvaal	4	81.7%	54.7%	 0	50.0%	2
Randfontein	1	80.4%	80.4%	 0	100.0%	3
Ekurhuleni Metropolitan	17	79.9%	74.9%	 1	100.0%	4
Merafong City	5	77.8%	75.2%	 0	100.0%	5
Lesedi	3	70.2%	69.1%	 0	100.0%	6
Emfuleni	3	66.9%	66.8%	 0	100.0%	7
Mogale City	3	66.7%	56.5%	 0	66.7%	8
City of Tshwane Metropolitan	15	63.3%	56.8%	 0	73.3%	9
Westonaria	1	56.8%	56.8%	 0	100.0%	10
GT Total	59			5		

Figure 4.2: Comparative analysis of provincial performance. Adapted from Green Drop Report (2011: 2)

The Department of Water and Sanitation's Green Drop certification regulation programme seeks to identify and develop the core competencies in municipalities to sustainably improve the level of water management in the country (Green Drop Report, 2011: 1). The Green Drop programme "clarifies the requirements and obligations placed on water service institutions, thereby protecting consumers from a potentially unsustainable and unsafe service (Green Drop Report, 2011: 1).

Municipalities are measured against nine key performance areas of which only the management criteria relevant to the study, and on which ERWAT was found to be falling short, are discussed:

- ✓ **Management skills** – an average of five Wastewater Treatment Plants (WWTPs) of the seventeen works assessed received the minimum ninety percent rating in meeting the criterion in the final 2011 and preliminary 2012 reports (Green Drop Report, 2011: 138-139, ERWAT Green Drop Preliminary Report, 2012: 16).

The sub-requirements needed to meet the management criterion are copies of operator classification certificates, competency levels and proof of qualifications (Green Drop Report, 2011: 5) that have to be provided by management. In Wastewater Treatment Plants where there were no managers, record keeping was found to be a major challenge. The challenge resulted in a situation where all certificates to prove the correct personnel grading for the specific works were not available and new staff members were not classified as required. The processing of classification certificates and querying thereof with the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWA) were not done as promptly as they should, resulting in the failure of the stringent criterion required for a Green Drop award.

5. The departure of Plant managers ***weakened knowledge management*** within ERWAT. Employee turnover compromised tacit and explicit knowledge sharing. Knowledge processes are of key importance in an organisation as they ensure knowledge generation, capturing, storage and reuse.

The interviews with Regional and District Managers highlighted the fact that when Plant managers left, they departed with the knowledge and skills acquired during their tenure in the Wastewater Treatment Plant, which unfortunately could not be retrieved and used once they had left. The East Rand Water Care does not have an electronic knowledge management system where knowledge of how to do a specific job is kept for later use. Merali and Davies (2001: 92) corroborate the notion of the importance of knowledge capture and utilisation to meet the needs of diverse and evolving communities.

6. The interviews with the Human Resources Consultant responsible for organisational development; four Regional and two District Managers revealed that the East Rand Water ***Care lost resources in the form of finances and time***

invested in human resources for ensuring the proficiency of the Plant managers in their tasks as a result of employee turnover. The resources referred to here are the time spent on the allocation of coaches who taught the managers how to deal with certain tasks through socialisation and the financial resources expended in registering employees in training programmes meant to sharpen their skills.

4.4.3 Findings on ERWAT's Internal Employee Retention Strategies

- Through quantitative secondary data analysis of the human resources reports, the study found that, though the Home Ownership Benefit Policy of 1995 exists to enhance retention, few Plant managers participated in the scheme as most preferred to reside in the accommodation provided for personnel in the wastewater treatment plants. The preference was the result of Plant managers wanting to be closer to the works in case of emergencies and on-call duties and also for cost savings as they did not pay rent and electricity for the accommodation. Others did not participate because of the terms and conditions of participation, for example, if a Plant manager's spouse received such a benefit in their employment, be it government or private, the employees were barred from benefiting from the scheme as this was viewed as a double benefit for one household. The result is that the policy does not encourage retention of Plant managers as it should.
- Qualitative and quantitative data analysis of the job titles and numbers of beneficiaries of the Rural Building Assistance Policy was used to extract results for its impact in retaining Plant managers. The study found that the Rural Building Assistance Policy of 1995 also does not succeed in bringing about retention as it is mostly utilised by General Workers who cannot afford subsidised housing, whom the organisation does not have a problem retaining. All Plant managers do not utilise the policy meant to assist employee retention and therefore it is not useful in retaining them.

- The interviews with the thirteen former employees who did not highlight health hazards and feelings of being unsafe helped the study to determine that the Safety Policy of 1996 to a great extent succeeds in bringing about retention as only two former managers pointed to feelings of being unsafe at the works. However, non-compliance with the safety policy relating to the late provision of personal protective equipment, the negation of safety rules and procedures by some personnel and reduced enforcement and monitoring of the policy were found to fail to enhance retention.
- Based on the oral accounts of the Human Resources Executive and eleven former employees, the study found that the Flexitime Policy did not have a huge influence on the retention of employees. Attending to personal and family matters could be arranged with new employers who may not have a similar policy, but are nonetheless regulated by the Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act No. 11 of 2002 (Republic of South Africa, 2002a) on matters relating to leave. Whether a Flexitime Policy exists or does not, an employee's consideration regarding whether to take or reject a new tempting offer would not be swayed in the direction of the current employer by the existence of such a policy. Employees are able to utilise the relevant types of leave provided for by the Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act 11 of 2002 (Republic of South Africa, 2002a) for personal and family matters.
- The previous plant managers of the East Rand Water Care took offers that came with a medical aid subsidy or structured in such a way that it was possible for them to afford medical aid. This was according to the interviews held with former employees who were interviewed. The East Rand Water Care's medical aid benefit therefore is also offered by their competitors to attract new employees, neutralising the effectiveness of the organisation's policy in retaining workers.

- Despite the availability of funding to assist employees to equip themselves academically and enhance their knowledge base and skills, the Study Scheme Policy of 2008 did not prove to be attractive to the Plant managers, as shown during interviews with former employees. The interviews revealed that the Policy did not accommodate of the managers' work schedule as it only caters for part-time studies for employees who at times have to be on-call.

The policy stipulates that employees who fail to be found competent at the end of the programme have to repay the whole amount incurred for their studies. This resulted in low uptake of the study assistance by Plant managers who opted to study privately, with the result that employees found it easy to depart as they were not bound to serve the longer periods within the organisation imposed on anyone taking the education assistance offered internally.

4.5 COMMON THEMES BETWEEN LITERATURE REVIEW AND FINDINGS

The section on common themes discusses ten common features that were found to have similarity between the literature review and the findings of this research. Health risks; low identification with the environment; economic situation; employee poaching; unmet expectations; communication; family, costs, inefficiency and underperformance and finally employee retention strategies will be discussed.

4.5.1 Health risks

The first research objective in this paper sought to identify the most common and unique reasons for the turnover of young professional Plant managers in

the East Rand Water Care. The study found that the *health risks associated with working in a wastewater treatment works* are the unique reason.

The finding is common with Snow and Mutschler's (2012: 5) study, which found the risk of dangerous working conditions, defective equipment and hazardous gases in wastewater treatment works to be a reason for employees leaving.

4.5.2 Low identification with the environment

The study also found *low identification* with the wastewater environment to be a reason for employee turnover. The notion of low identification with the environment is shared by Bentein *et al.* (2005: 469) who found that the lack of personal identification with and an emotional attachment to the organisation could lead to turnover. Low identification with the environment is also echoed by Snow and Mutschler (2012: 5), who refer to the unappealing conditions under which employees in a wastewater works operate, which people do not want to be part of.

4.5.3 Economic situation

Mueller and Price (1990: 322) earlier argued that the economic model to turnover suggests that the employee's decision to leave or stay in employment is the result of an employee's rational cost-benefit analysis. The arguments by Donoghue and Castle (2007: 361), and Allen *et al.* (2010: 48-49) that economic conditions can also lead to voluntary turnover also amplifies the above argument by Mueller and colleague. The finding by the researcher that *economic reasons* are a trigger for turnover resonates with and confirms the other researchers' findings.

4.5.4 Employee poaching

Poaching as a theme in the findings of this research is shared with the results reported by Smith in Allen *et al.* (2010: 48) and Samuel and Chipunza (2009:

410), who agreed that poaching of staff amongst competitors is a reason for employee turnover.

4.5.5 Unmet expectations

The research found that employees leave the employ of the East Rand Water Care because of *unmet expectations*. The finding is mutual with Wright and Bonnet's (1993: 151) conclusion that suggests that turnover of high performers is caused by an organization's failure to meet their expectations of higher incentives that match their output. Mano-Negrin and Tzafrir (2004: 455) amplified the finding arguing that an employee's salary that not comparable to the work effort he or she puts in, can lead to employee turnover.

4.5.6 Communication

Communication is another common theme in the researcher's findings and those discovered in the literature review. The researcher identified a lack of communication as a reason for turnover. Ongori (2007: 050) found that employees have a strong need to be informed. Chen and Bliese, in Avolio *et al.* (2004: 955) also focus on the subject, arguing that greater closeness between leaders and followers may facilitate the quality of communication.

4.5.7 Family

Another mutual theme between the literature and the findings of the researcher regarding the reasons for turnover concerned family reasons. The researcher found that two employees left the employ of ERWAT because they had to relocate and join their families. Similar findings by Hom *et al.* (2012: 833), Boyar *et al.* (2011: 10), and Muteswa and Ortlepp (2011: 14) identified personal family influences as reasons for turnover, all postulating that many departures are prompted by family.

4.5.8 Costs

The costliness of turnover is a common theme in both the literature review and the results of this research paper. This paper's findings agree with Izzo and

Withers (2004: 54), Mehdi *et al.* (2012: 42), Ongori (2007: 051), Tuzun and Kalemci (2011: 518) that an employee's departure has tangible and intangible costs.

4.5.9 Inefficiency and underperformance

The study found the non-attainment of Green Drop statuses by a large number of plants of the East Rand Water Care is affected by employee turnover. This resonates well with the argumentation by Snow and Mutschler (2012: 4) and the Environmental Labour Market Research (2007: 7) also found that turnover results in the deterioration, compromise and degradation of public health and the environment.

Wright and Bonnet (1993: 150) found underperformance resulted from employee turnover and that is common with the researcher's finding of the poor achievement of one Green Drop result by the East Rand Water in the period under review.

4.5.10 Employee retention strategies

Retention is a common theme in the researcher's findings and the review of the literature, with the Energy and Water Services Sector Skills Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011a: 80) calling for the sector to invest in retention strategies to ensure that engineers are retained. The researcher, however, found that ERWAT's policies aimed to assist employee retention are not designed specifically at retaining Plant managers.

4.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The findings discussed in this chapter highlighted seven turnover reasons to justify why young plant managers left the employ of the East Rand Water Care. Each of the employees, the study found, left as a result of a combination of two or more of the seven reasons provided. Unique reasons for leaving were found to be:

1. The exposure to faecal material,

2. Poisonous gases and
3. Potentially injurious faulty equipment which could compromise the health of workers.

Financial loss, time and knowledge losses, inefficiency, high absenteeism and low achievement were found to be the negative effects associated with the departure of young plant managers in the organisation. Employee retention policies that are in place were found either to fail in encouraging retention or to fail in targeting Plant managers for retention. The research identified ten common themes in the review of the literature covered in this research and the researcher's own findings.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This concluding chapter first makes a deduction of the research results. The limitations of the study are also explained and recommendations for further research of the subject are offered. The chapter also proposes recommendations regarding the three objectives of the research that could be employed to address the findings of the study. Concluding remarks summarise the research project.

5.2 INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

The results clearly indicate that professional employee perceptions have no causal link to the organisation's employee turnover rate. Within the East Rand Water Care, the reasons for employee turnover reflect personal reasons and organisational conditions. Personal reasons include low identification with the industry, and family.

Organisational reasons can be surmised as the health risks associated with working in a wastewater treatment operation, economic reasons like low salaries offered by the organisation, poaching, unmet expectations of higher incentives, and the lack of proper communication.

Secondly, the impact of employee attrition is no different from effects discussed in the literature review. The effects were that of quantifiable and unquantifiable costs and underperformance which led to underachievement. The results also reveal that the retention strategies currently in place do not achieve a lot in bringing about employee embeddedness.

5.3 FUTURE RESEARCH

Research that may be undertaken in the future could focus on specific retention strategies that could be adopted by organisations in the wastewater sector to assist in efforts aimed at employee retention.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

5.4.1 Recommendations regarding the most common and unique reasons for turnover

- It is recommended that the employer should implement mechanisms for stringent observation of health and safety regulations. This would help to reduce the prevalence of hazards associated with working in the wastewater environment. In doing so, the perceptions amongst employees that the environment is hazardous and risky would change and help to stem employee attrition.
- To further prevent the health hazards in relation to the exposure and inhalation of poisonous gases, employees have to be equipped with gas detectors whenever entering confined spaces or supervising those who work in such spaces.
- Regular maintenance of faulty equipment needs to be prioritised and employees need to be discouraged from using tools that is not fit for use.
- It is recommended that employees should work in groups of two in areas where hazards are anticipated in order to be able to rescue on another if an incident occurs.
- Faulty equipment should be removed from sites until proper maintenance is completed.
- Most importantly, employees should be sensitised through proper training regarding issues of safety.
- To address the low identification with the wastewater field, the employer should invest in building the company's image for its employees, potential employees and society to ensure that the sector is seen as the important

component in society that it is. In that way society would hold the wastewater treatment environment in higher esteem, respect the science and technology that is associated with its operation, appreciate its workers, which would support the employees in continuing to be of help to society and wanting to continue working for the big brand that the sector would become.

- With regard to the economic reasons that have been found to cause employee turnover within ERWAT, it is recommended that the organisation do a comparative analysis of its own salary structure and that of similar organisations within the wastewater treatment sector. If the results indicate that the organisation's salaries are lower, it should make an effort to pay similar or better salaries to keep its employees happy. That, in turn, would help reverse turnover.
- To curb poaching, ERWAT should implement the recommendations above, and in addition ensure that it has a better organisational culture than the organisations that are its competitors; one in which employees feel at home, respected and appreciated.
- Relating to employees leaving because of a lack of higher incentives for high performers, the researcher recommends that the employer should implement its performance management policy correctly. Managers who have people reporting to them need to be taught how to develop better performance contracts with their subordinates that could be assessed in a manner that would ensure that poor and good performers are in a position to accept their failures or successes and receive the reward for their efforts.
- Regarding communication, it is recommended that communication platforms be created where information would flow from the higher echelons of the organisation to the lowest structures and vice-versa.

- To address the issue of turnover triggered by family reasons, it is recommended that the organisation ensures that those employees with distant families are given opportunities to take regular leave from their allotted annual leave days in order to spend reasonable time with their loved ones.

5.4.2 Recommendations regarding the effects of employee turnover

- In order to mitigate against effects resulting from employee turnover, the organization needs to identify and attach a capable understudy to a sitting Plant manager. The mentee would be allowed access to all documents and receive mentorship from the manager on all management activities including staff management. This would create a situation that would ensure that there would be a trusted and familiar face that would run the operation seamlessly even when the manager is not there. Such mentees would have to be appointed as plant managers should their mentors decide to leave. This would eliminate the costs associated with replacing plant managers.
- High absenteeism rates would be controlled when the above recommendation is implemented, as employees would still be under the guidance of someone who has already been there, working hand in hand with the previous manager.
- To prevent the non-attainment of organisational effectiveness, efficiency and Green Drop certification, the organisation needs to adopt an effectiveness approach that would ensure efficiency through continuity within the organisation. The proposed approach to effectiveness and efficiency is the stakeholder approach. According to Robbins and Barnwell (2006: 88), the approach aims to satisfy all stakeholders or constituencies. The constituencies are business owners, employees, customers, local community officials and government agencies. The constituencies are satisfied by meeting their needs like growth in earnings for business owners and satisfaction with working conditions for employees (Robbins &

Barnwell, 2006: 88). For customers, unions, local community officials and government agencies the needs would be satisfaction with service; competitive benefits; lack of damage to community environment and compliance with laws, respectively (Robbins & Barnwell, 2006: 88).

- For the organisation to ensure proper knowledge generation and management a knowledge management model should be adopted and implemented.
- To counter the loss of resources like the time spent on mentoring sessions, the organisation can broaden the pool of those in the mentoring programme to include those identified to take over from the plant managers. That will ensure the skills and knowledge that would initially be shared with one manager are now offered to the official attached to the Plant manager as well, in one session. In that way even if a manager leaves, there would still be someone with the same capacity managing the treatment plant.

5.4.3 Recommendation regarding ERWAT's employee retention strategies

- To ensure the retention of key employees it is recommended that the organisation develop a policy specifically for effective employee retention strategies. The organisation may cultivate a feeling of family amongst its employees as part of its broad retention strategy.

5.4.4 Recommendation regarding possible mechanisms to reduce turnover

- It is recommended that ERWAT implement the recommendations on research objectives one and three in order to reduce turnover. Recommendations on specific objective two deal with the after effects of turnover and therefore cannot help in the reduction of employee turnover.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The first chapter introduced the reader to the research setting. The nature of the organisation, its role and the staff demographics are discussed with special emphasis on the plant manager population.

A brief background to the South African water situation is highlighted and the challenges faced by the country in the provision of clean water and sanitation are presented. It is worth noting that the rationale of the research was the notable resignations of key personnel, that is, Plant managers. The resignations are a cause for concern as they have impacted negatively in the achievement of organisational goals.

The research problem is identified in the chapter as the high turnover rate of Plant managers within the organisation.

The research objectives are highlighted as the identification and assessment of unique and common reasons for the turnover of the identified employee group and the effects of such occurrences. The review of internal retention strategies and recommendations are also put out as study aims.

Chapter 2 dealt with the review of the literature and defines the concept of turnover, its history, forms and different models. A further discussion of generic and sector-specific reasons ensues, leading to the effects of turnover and how it can be averted.

The third chapter focuses on the legislation that emphasises the importance of retaining employees. The statutes emphasise the implementation of administrative frameworks that encourage employee retention to ensure that the rights and health of citizens remain protected and that they remain a government priority. A number of the key legislation stipulate proper staff management, allowing staff to take leave for family-related activities, proper communication with employees through relevant structures and employee development as measures for containing turnover.

ERWAT's internal retention strategies used to curb turnover were discussed in the chapter. Some of the strategies referred to are the Home Owners Benefit, Safety, Performance Rewards and Study Scheme policies.

The fourth chapter discussed the methodology used to gather the research data, which comprised analysis of secondary data obtained from various existing documents. In order to validate the information gathered from the source documents, structured interviews were conducted. With regard to data analysis in the study, the researcher used qualitative and quantitative methods. To ensure everyone who should be part of the sample was represented, the probability sampling technique was used. The simple and the stratified random sampling techniques were used; the former for the purposes of interviews with the previous employees and the latter for the different managers within the organisation.

Findings of the study identified eight reasons for employee turnover within the organisation. All the reasons identified as triggers for employee turnover were linked to personal and organisational issues and not to professional employee perceptions. The most common reasons concerned low identification with the wastewater environment, economic issue, poaching, higher incentives, communication and family. The most unique reason found was the health risks associated with the wastewater industry.

The findings on the results of employee turnover were the costs, absenteeism, inefficiencies, poor achievement of organisational goals, weakened knowledge management and loss of resources.

The organisation's retention assisting strategies were found to lack effectiveness in retaining the Plant manager population.

The organisation has to ensure the leadership understand turnover, put measures based on the literature review, like developing well thought and challenging job contents, in place to mitigate against the phenomenon. The development of such measures would curtail the effects of turnover like disruptions and costs to mention a few. In addition, the organisation needs to develop a turnover risk table based on the results of this research and identify

actions that need to be taken to reduce such turnover reasons happening again and monitor such actions on a regular basis.

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